Interview with William D. Wolle

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

AMBASSADOR WILLIAM D. WOLLE

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy

Initial interview date: March 6, 1991

Q: Today is March 6, 1991. This is an interview with Ambassador William D. Wolle which is being done on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and I am Charles Stuart Kennedy. I might add here that Bill Wolle and I served in the same country, Saudi Arabia, in the late 1950s at one time and we may make remarks referring to the present American and ally war against Iraq...the so-called Gulf War with Iraq of 1991 ended just last week.

Bill I wonder if you could give a little of your background—when, where you were born and something about your education in your early years?

WOLLE: I was born and grew up in Sioux City, Iowa. Both my father and mother had been born and lived all their life in Iowa. So the family roots were deep there.

Q: You were born in 1928?

WOLLE: Yes, 1928. I went through the various public schools in Sioux City and on to Morningside College in Sioux City from which I graduated in 1949. That college career was sort of strange because it was interrupted when I joined the army in 1946 and spent an 18-month enlistment...which believe it or not was possible then. I came back then and finished at Morningside. I have the odd distinction in my early life time of having been

accepted twice at Harvard, once for college and once for Law School, and turned them down both times to do something else. In 1949 I went to Columbia University's School of International Affairs which had started only in 1946. It was a two year program for the Master of International Affairs degree. This meant that my class when it graduated in 1951 was only the fourth graduating class.

Q: You must be the only Morningside graduate to have gone into the Foreign Service.

WOLLE: Well, no, the pioneer in that regard was John Wesley Jones, known as Johnny Jones in the Foreign Service, but known as Wesley to his friends in Sioux City. He was about a half or two thirds of a generation older and curiously he grew up with his family directly across the street from one of the homes in which I grew up.

I still have a very close friend in Sioux City in the person of Wesley's younger brother who was in the livestock business all his life there.

Anyway Wesley became ambassador to Peru and Libya during a career heavily concentrated in Europe.

More recently, one of the Sioux Cityans who is still serving with great distinction is Mel Levitsky, who has been ambassador to an Eastern European country.

Q: Bulgaria, I believe.

WOLLE: Yes, I think so. Mel was born and grew up as I did in Sioux City some years behind me.

Q: What pushed you towards going to Columbia and later joining the Foreign Service?

WOLLE: I think two things. Perhaps the first was a really strong interest as I grew up...apart from sports which was probably number one...in the national/international scene. When I was about 12 in 1940 I started a scrapbook focusing on international affairs using

the Sioux City Journal, the Des Moines Register, to which I had access, and a couple of news magazines. I kept this up right through early 1946. It is several volumes. I keep it in a couple of cardboard boxes and am very careful with it because I think it might be of real interest to somebody some day. As a matter of fact when I joined the Foreign Service I still hadn't finished the thing. I had clippings cut out and extra pages and I used part of my off time in Baghdad, oddly enough, to put the final year or so into the actual scrapbook. That really focused my interest, I think, more than anything.

Q: We were both born in 1928 and I found World War II was the greatest geography lesson...a daily geography lesson and feeling about the world which I don't think is available today because one was riveted to it for a period of four or five years.

WOLLE: You are absolutely right. I felt the same way. In fact, when I finished high school I was only sixteen and therefore didn't go right into the service as so many of my fellow graduates did, being a year or year and a half older. I went right on to college, but I had this feeling that I was missing something. I was sort of left out. My friends had either joined the Navy or been drafted. So in 1946 I took this 18 month Army enlistment. I must say it paid off financially because the GI Bill was still in effect. In the end I think it was one of the smartest moves I ever made. Over half my service was spent in the Occupation in western Germany.

Q: I wonder if you could describe a little about this program at Columbia? Not only what you were taught but the atmosphere. Here, you were young men and young women getting ready to get out and do something in the 1949-51 period.

WOLLE: Right. It was a graduate school of about 30-35 students in each beginning class, which meant about 60-70 in the two years combined. Most of the students were roughly my age, in their early 20s. There was a smattering of older students. For example, our military was sending a few officers of the Major/Lt. Colonel rank to get graduate degrees in International Affairs. There were a few European and Asian students, not many. It was

of great interest. I found the work was a little tougher than it had been at Morningside. Standards were a bit higher. But I enjoyed it and we had the extra benefit, I think, at Columbia of hearing known figures in national and foreign affairs.

I recall President Eisenhower, who was President of Columbia the last year I was there, making the first of what they called the Gabriel Silver Lectures to which a lot of prestige was attached. Most of our class attended. All in all it was a fun but a busy two years.

Q: How did you hear about the Foreign Service and how did you get into it?

WOLLE: Well, frankly, I really had in mind more a career of college or university teaching when I went to Columbia. But, like so many of my friends, I took the Foreign Service exams between the first and second years. At that time it was a three and a half day exam as you well remember. I found out in the late fall that I had passed the exams except for the language. I had missed on the German by a point. So I studied some German the second year and passed the German part of the exam in the spring of 1951.

So there I was with a new MIA degree in June of 1951 having been told that a few months down the road I could probably get the call to come in for the three-month orientation program; I decided I would try it. As it turned out I tried it for a whole career.

Q: I wonder if you could give a little idea about the early training you got when you came to the State Department, before you went out? Also a little about the class and how you and the class looked at the world and the United States' role in the world at that time.

WOLLE: There were, I think, 27 of us in the three-month class. Our classes were held in one of those temporary barrack buildings. New State was not built, of course, and they were down along C Street. About the end of the third or fourth week we were told which would be our post. Oddly, of the 27 of us, two drew Baghdad, Charles Widney and myself. From that time on we were spending a part of each day in language training—Arabic in my case. There were lectures followed by question/answer periods mostly by officers of

the Foreign Service or the Civil Service who were serving in the State Department. Some talked about different geographical regions, some talked about the functions that you would be called upon to perform in the Foreign Service. But there was none of this hands-on -lets-act-it-out kind of program which I believe characterizes some of the orientation today.

Q: Particularly consular training, but I think some of the others like administrative training. Well, what about your class? Who were they?

WOLLE: They were from all over the country. There was one lady. One out of 27, I suppose that was typical of the time. No minorities.

Q: I think that was very typical at the time.

WOLLE: Most of them with at least a college degree. A number with graduate degrees. Two or three, perhaps more, with law degrees. A few had working experience in the world, but I think the oldest of the group was 30 or 31. I think 31 was the cutoff point during that period for joining the FSO ranks. I kept track of this group as the years went along, of course. Pretty soon it dwindled down. There were 20 left, 18, 16, 15. I think by the time I retired in 1986 there were only two of us still active.

Q: How did you feel about going to Baghdad? Was this your request or was it out of the blue?

WOLLE: As I recall the Middle East was one of the regions I had named. I felt that since I was trying this career and not really wedded to it at that early point, I wanted to go some place which was very non-American. Some place where I could really get a feeling for what the less developed world was all about. So Baghdad pleased me.

Q: You were in Baghdad from 1951-54, is that right?

WOLLE: I was actually there from January, 1952 until April, 1954.

Q: What was the situation there at that time?

WOLLE: At that time the country was ruled by the Crown Prince, Regent Abdul Illah. The later King of Iraq, Faisal, was a boy of 16 or so when I arrived. In fact, about half way through my tour in Baghdad, there was a week of grand celebration in the country. Hussein came over, his cousin from Jordan. The two of them were reaching the age of 18 at about the same time and each one was officially taking on the title of monarch. The Iraqis for their part spent several furious months just before the grand occasion patching up the city, paving streets, doing all kinds of civic improvement. As matter of fact probably their biggest burst of that sort of activity for many years to come. I guess they are going to be in another era now of rebuilding. But, of course, the Baghdad of today bears no relationship, even bombed out as some of it is, to the Baghdad of the early 1950s when it was very much an underdeveloped society.

Q: What was the political situation there?

WOLLE: The British were still very powerful. The British Embassy, from all accounts, certainly was close to the ear of Nuri es-Said, the Prime Minister, who for a good many years had been the real Administrator in the country. And, although about three years after I left Baghdad, the whole monarchy and Nuri es-Said along with it were thrown out of power, I think we would have to credit Nuri and the government of the late 1940s and early 1950s in Iraq for instituting the economic development program which became quite well know internationally for being a serious, fairly well financed program which was doing a lot to bring Iraq's level up. In fact, people knew there could eventually be trouble from potential revolutionaries for that government of the early and mid 1950s but many would say—Well, if only the Iraqi society would somehow go to sleep for 10-20 years and then wake up and see the economic development that has been produced perhaps that would be the best thing in the long run for the country.

Q: What were you doing and what was the Embassy like at that time?

WOLLE: Well, I was very much junior. I was the sole consular officer, issuing visas, handling some passport matters, and frankly learning as I went along—primarily from my expert Foreign Service National, or as we called them then, local employee, Edmond Totunchi, who later emigrated to the United States. He hadn't been in the job, himself, very long but he had been thoroughly immersed in the work of the office and he kept me on the right track at least most of the time.

The Embassy had a small 2-officer political section. Probably the main feature of those couple of years that I served in Iraq, as far as the American presence is concerned, was the mushrooming foreign aid program. When I arrived in January 1952, there were perhaps two or three AID officers. But as the months rolled on several new officers arrived each month and by the time I left, the AID installation somewhat dwarfed the Embassy proper. They were doing all sorts of things in the field, agriculture primarily.

Q: Your Ambassador was Waldemar J. Gallman?

WOLLE: No, the Ambassador when I arrived and for much of the first period was Ned Crocker. He was replaced in due course by Ambassador Burton Berry. The overlapping Charg# and DCM for both Crocker and Berry was Phil Ireland, who of course academically was well-versed in Iraq. He had written one of the standard texts about modern Iraq. In fact Mrs. Ireland came from a family that had a lot to do with the establishment of the medical school at the American University of Beirut. So they were the hierarchy in my time. Dave Newsom was the Public Affairs Officer and doing a great job.

Q: I had an interview with Phil Ireland who obviously is getting along in years and although he didn't go into it in great detail, I take it there weren't the greatest relations between Ireland and at least one of the Ambassadors. Did you sense that?

WOLLE: At my exalted low rank I was not really privy to a lot but you couldn't help sensing what was going on. I think there were some differences there. I mentioned Dave Newsom, a very effective PAO and a very effective person. I think there were times when Phil Ireland got a little jealous thinking that perhaps Dave was catching the ear of the Ambassador a little too often.

My own relations with Phil Ireland, who was really my immediate boss the first year, were good. He had an open door as far as I was concerned and he gave me some very good advice.

My last year and a half, by the way, was spent in the economic/commercial section because of the rotation system. That was a different sort of work. I was doing the reporting on petroleum, dates, etc. under the guidance of a relatively senior officer who had myself and one other FSO reporting to him.

Q: Were you feeling any problems with the Embassy's relations, the State Department people in the Embassy, with AID? In those days it wasn't as integrated and there was separate financing. Often this was a real problem because in many cases AID had both the money and essentially the power.

WOLLE: Well, they certainly had the money. They were really building up. But I wasn't really affected much by that, again because of my junior position in the Embassy, I think. I sensed though that there were those who were higher up in the Embassy who felt a little jealous of the expansion that the AID people were undergoing. At the same time I don't think it was a feeling that our AID program was going wrong. They were backing it.

We also had in the Embassy a military attach# system. Two officers represented each of the three main branches of the Service.

Q: Did you have much contact with the Iraqis...both the government and the people? If you did, how did you find dealing with them?

WOLLE: I found it was pretty easy to deal with the Iraqis in the ministries that my work called on me to do in terms of the petroleum and other reporting. Of course I was also in touch with the Iraq Petroleum Company who were mostly expatriate British. I didn't feel that I was being harassed or being led around and being kept away from the person that I had to see. I suppose, although I really liked to get out of the office and have the contacts, looking back one thing I probably could have and should have done even more frequently was simply make the command decision to get out of the office more often and increase the numbers and frequency of contacts. You get into a routine and think that this or that has to be written today, thus you are stuck in the office. But looking back, I think some of that wasn't necessary.

Q: I think all of us feel this way. Well, tell me did you have any impression, again trying to go back to the time, about the Iraqi people? When you look what happened, particularly the July, 14, 1958 overthrow of the monarchy and all, it seems to be a bloody mindedness in the Iraqis that sort of justifies all the talk that one hears periodically about the Middle East—you have to worry about the mob in the street. Really in a way the Iraqi mob was the only one that did do something like this.

WOLLE: Yes, you are right. I always felt that. In fact the practice of dragging bodies behind vehicles in the street during a revolution or an attempted coup, that is not an Arab practice, that is an Iraqi practice. The Iraqis I knew or knew about were among the most friendly, most hospitable Arabs that one can meet, really good friends, but then there is a violent streak in some that is just at the other end of the spectrum.

Q: Did you have any feeling about how America was considered in those time? I mean not just by officials but by the man in the street?

WOLLE: I think our image was good. The Iraqis who chose to castigate foreigners or “imperialists” tended to take their feelings out on the British. I mean it had been a British Mandate and this was the logical thing. The British presence was so much larger than ours —in part the official presence but more than that—there were thousands of British subjects still making their living working there either for the government or privately. So I felt we were well liked and that America was admired.

Q: After this initial tour how did you feel about the Foreign Service?

WOLLE: I was ready to continue. Like everyone you wait to see what your next post is going to be. Finally the telegram comes and mine said — American Consulate, Glasgow, Scotland. I thought that ought to be all right.

I arrived back in Washington only to find out that the orders had been changed. Instead of Glasgow I was to go to Manchester, England. It was a downer for a little bit, but not for long because I soon realized there probably wasn't that much difference between the two. My work probably wouldn't be much different. And as I looked at the map and realized that Manchester was centrally located within Great Britain I thought I could probably cover the map pretty well on weekends and vacations. So I was pleased.

Q: I have you in Manchester from 1954-57.

WOLLE: Yes, from mid 1954 until November, 1956.

Q: What were you doing there?

WOLLE: Manchester was a three-officer post. A senior Foreign Service officer, often an officer given Manchester as his retirement post; and two junior officers. Both of us juniors had served in one post previously. Marian Nash had served in Germany. We were doing consular work. One of us concentrated on visa services and the other on passport and citizenship work. There was quite a bit of passport work because we still had several

American air bases in our consular district and because of dependents this meant quite a heavy passport load.

Q: Who was Consul General when you were there?

WOLLE: The Consul General when I arrived was Paul Pearson and before I left (I had a few months in charge in between which was good experience) Rufus Lane arrived. For both it proved to be a retirement post.

My own work was first the one kind of consular work and then the other, but interspersed with it I had the good fortune to do some reporting on the cotton industry...the Manchester region being its center. I knew little or nothing about the cotton industry, so learned a lot.

The interesting thing about that consular district, Manchester, was that at earlier times in the history of our relations with the UK, we had had no fewer than five or six consulates located at cities which by the mid-50s were within the Manchester consular district. We had had, in fact as recently as 1953, consulates at Bradford and Newcastle. In earlier years we had consulates at Sheffield, Stoke-on-Trent, Hull and Nottingham. Of course now even Manchester is closed.

Q: It is London and Edinburgh now. Were you able to get around and do some economic or political reporting?

WOLLE: I was doing very little except for the cotton and other textile industries. The officer in charge did a certain amount of political reporting. He, of course, was sort of under the control of the supervisory consul general in London, a fellow by the name of Tom Bailey for a good part of that period. Bailey would come up from time to time to see if we were doing our job.

By the way there were just two countries during those years, the mid-50s, who maintained consular establishments in Manchester staffed by career officers. The Swiss and the

Americans. There were about 18-20 countries who had honorary consuls...in fact the honorary ones were usually consul generals, with rows of ribbons!. So there was an active Manchester Consular Corps, with monthly luncheons. Most of these honorary consuls were successful business people and traders who took great pride in representing foreign countries. Some of them actually conducted a fair number of official services...shipping, consular invoices, etc. The Corps' presence was particularly welcomed by the Lord Mayor of Manchester who at his annual formal dinner loved having all of the consuls, be they honorary or not, lined up along side him to show them off to the citizens.

Q: How did you find relations with the British? The war was over but the post-war period lasted a long time.

WOLLE: Yes, and in fact a few things were still rationed when I arrived although that soon went off. I think eggs and meat were about the last items rationed. Our relations were excellent except at the very end because the last couple of months of my time coincided with the British/French/Israeli attack at Suez. Their little game was spoiled by Eisenhower, so in those last few weeks I may not have been such a welcome commodity in town.

Q: Even at that level did you feel things sort of closing down?

WOLLE: From this distance looking back it is kind of hard to say. The close friends that we had were still close friends. They found differences in terms of British and American policy but it wasn't so much that it was uncomfortable for us. Just a bit of apprehension that somebody might get at you with a vigorous argument and you might spoil a friendship before you left.

By the way, the business of a consulate in a place like that at that time, the extreme amount of consular work and consular invoices and certifying crew lists, because we had several seaports in the district, the work was really carried on extensively by the very loyal local employees. We had about 10 or 11 in the Consulate. Many of them had been working in an American Consulate either there or in Liverpool for as long as 20-30 years.

They were the most sincere and loyal people that you could ever hope to meet. They were also good teachers just as my first local assistant in Baghdad had been.

By the way they had undergone severe bombings during World War II. The building in which we rented space was damaged in several air raids. This says all the more for the loyalty of some of the people who stuck it out.

Q: Was this the point when you decided you were going to specialize in Arabic?

WOLLE: Yes, when the time came to leave England I applied for language training. Not in Arabic but for training in what we called GTI, either Greek, Turkish or Iranian, I didn't care which one.

Q: They were all in one Bureau at that time.

WOLLE: But the answer came back Arabic. So I said okay, though I had not delved into the language very much during my tour in Baghdad.

Q: Were you married at the time?

WOLLE: I was married during my tour in Manchester having met my bride-to-be in Baghdad. She was a Norwegian girl who was a governess for the children of David Newsom's family in Baghdad. She had done that for them in Oslo which was Newsom's previous post. We had met the first week I was in Baghdad. You know at that time you had to go through the drill of getting permission to marry a non-American. We had applied for that with Phil Ireland's blessing before I left Baghdad, but the formalities, security checks, etc. took some time and it was not until May, 1955 that we were able to get married. Meanwhile she had spent a year or so studying French and working in Paris.

Q: So you both decided to launch off on this...did you have the feeling that when you went into Arabic that this was going to be a pretty long commitment to a section of the world?

WOLLE: Yes, I guess I did, although they told us that what this meant was that we would have our next post and possibly the one after that in the Arab world but would then move around. But as the years developed, following my language training, I realized that in career terms I would probably be better off to stick with the area rather than branch out too much. So Beirut led to a good many Arabic posts.

Q: Where did you study Arabic and how effective did you find the training?

WOLLE: Until my group of six FSOs, the pattern had been the first nine months at FSI in Washington followed by a year or a year plus in the language school in Beirut. However my group started in Beirut in March 1957 and we were supposedly to be there for two years. Had we known what was going to happen, we might have studied a little harder, although we worked at it certainly very seriously. A little after the first year was over the Lebanese scene erupted and before we knew it the language school was curtailed.

Q: This was 1958 wasn't it?

WOLLE: Yes. So my language training actually lasted for about a year and two or three months because by May, 1958 those of us left in the language school were either transferred to specific jobs within the Embassy in Beirut to fill in for people allowed to go home on home leave, or were transferred to other posts in the Middle East.

Q: Before we hit the turmoil and all, were you getting any feel for our relations with Israel? There is often talk that the Arabist is sort of hatched as anti-Israeli and all that.

WOLLE: I didn't really get that. I didn't feel that so much from my time in Baghdad either, though a year or so before I arrived in Iraq something like 100,000 Iraqi Jews had been forced to leave the country and most of them went to Israel. But during that time in Beirut we were studying apart from the Embassy as such, although we were finally made part of it because of the breakup of the language school. In fact I took advantage of the time, most of us did, to do some traveling which included Israel. We were able to drive across

the border at Ras Naqurah in southern Lebanon. I spent several days in Israel on three occasions.

The society in Lebanon was heavily anti-Israel, of course, but we weren't nor did we feel ourselves becoming particularly pro-Arab or anti-Israel. There were some exceptions among the range of my FSI colleagues in the language school. Two or three of them, including a couple who had served in Arab posts close to Israel, I thought from the time they arrived were very much anti-Israel. But for the most part, no, I think we were very objective about it.

Q: During the time you were included in the Beirut Embassy, what was the situation in Lebanon and what did you end up doing?

WOLLE: The Lebanese were threatening each other. Normal politics was collapsing. They began shooting each other. There began to be things like a bus being blown up now and then for no good reason; firing at night. As I recall one of the things that really started it off was the assassination of a well-known Lebanese journalist, whose name I have now forgotten. One thing led to another. Before the spring ended the security situation had deteriorated to the extent that USG dependents were given the choice of being voluntarily evacuated if they wished. My own family declined, staying until the very last plane out which in fact was a day or two after the US Marines landed on the beach in July, 1958.

There were some stone throwing incidents that I had to drive the car through, but nothing that really made me feel particularly unsafe.

Q: When the situation started getting difficult, what were you doing in the Embassy then?

WOLLE: I had been assigned to the economic/commercial section of the Embassy working for Enoch Duncan and doing some routine reporting on various economic and commercial matters...a lot of World Trade Directory reports and things like that. A couple of my

colleagues had been assigned to other parts of the Embassy, others had been transferred out of the country.

One of the things that some of us were doing was going around almost nightly, or let's say in the afternoons, to the major hotels in town where Americans were staying and filling them in on the security situation. Telephone connections were not always very good. I can remember a good many trips to the St. George's and other hotels. Of course, as soon as the Marines landed the Lebanese stopped shooting at each other and the situation was eventually resolved. A blood and guts Ambassador arrived in the person of Robert McClintock...not to say anything deprecating about Ambassador Donald Heath who had been there before.

Q: He was a much milder soul in a way wasn't he?

WOLLE: Yes and I got to know him particularly well later on in Saudi Arabia. The Lebanese security situation went from bad to very good almost overnight in the fall of 1958. Families were allowed back in, I think, by that fall, though in my case I was transferred out of Lebanon by the beginning of October. Q: This was the hey day of Nasserism and all, what was your view and the Embassy's view of Nasserism?

WOLLE: Well, views varied in the Embassy, but certainly the scene in Beirut was Nasser's scene. His portraits were everywhere. The banners across the street, the parades...it certainly was the era of Nasser as the person who stood up to the British and the French. But deeper then that, of course, there were all of these splits that still exist in Lebanon among the religious groups and political parties.

We would sometimes get certain inside accounts of what was going on in that regard from some of our language instructors, even before the days when the crisis erupted. Among them there were some Christians of different persuasions, and two Muslims, and while they stuck to their guns on the language most of the time, they enjoyed as well as we

did spending some of the breaks talking about Lebanese politics and civil and religious divisions.

Q: It was a very complicated situation. When the Marines landed there, were there some apprehension on our part as to whether this thing would work or not?

WOLLE: Oh, I think there was some in the early weeks, but there were never any really serious violations of the cease fire and so confidence built rapidly. When the Lebanese agreed on Gen. Fuad Chehab to take over and bring the country into a situation of general obedience nobody was too surprised.

I felt I would have learned a good deal more about Lebanese internal politics had I known French because certainly then, and maybe even for many years after that, a working knowledge of French was the real key to getting into the intricacies of the Lebanese as far as personal contacts were concerned. That is unless one had really fluent Arabic.

Q: The second Ambassador that came while you were there was Robert McClintock who was one of the great characters of the Foreign Service along with his poodle dogs, I think. What was your impression of him and how he operated at that time?

WOLLE: In Beirut my impression was that he was a gung ho type of person, vigorous, determined to make a mark, a real personality. But the best stories I have about Ambassador McClintock came a bit later when I was in Aden, my next post.

He and Mrs. McClintock, without their poodles, paid a visit to Aden. They wanted to see Aden...I think they went on to two or three other posts in the region. They flew in and were our house guests. As I recall Bill Crawford, my boss in Aden, was away at that time...up in Yemen, perhaps. So Mimmi and I had the McClintocks as house guests. She went shopping with Mrs. McClintock and from what she said Mrs. McClintock was every bit as bold as her husband. In fact, the story about her was that Mimmi was driving the car and they spied a rare parking spot near the shopping center. Before they could get into it

another car was heading for the same spot so Mrs. McClintock dashed out of the car, ran to this open parking space and literally laid down on it to scare the other car away until my wife could park.

By the way, Rob McClintock was a great swimmer. He always had a back problem so I understand for his health he had developed a habit of swimming. We took them out both afternoons they were there and he swam back and forth longer then I could keep track of doing his daily exercises.

Q: By the way on that, I heard somebody say that he did this in practically subfreezing weather one time at some post.

WOLLE:The McClintocks were to leave Aden on a P&O Line steamer. We arrived at the dock and went on board with them because it wasn't sailing for another 45 minutes or so. Together we sort of looked around the boat. He observed the lounge and the people there. He peered into the dining room where the first sitting was having a meal. There were gray heads everywhere. He turned to us and said something like, “Well, we certainly will be the only passengers under 70 on the whole boat.” Not his kind of crowd. But off they went.

Q: You were assigned to Aden and you went there when?

WOLLE: I went early October, 1958 expecting a full tour of duty. I worked there for Bill Crawford...

Q: That is William R. Crawford.

WOLLE: Yes. He had already served a couple of years at the post. I replaced Mike Sterner, who oddly enough was transferred to the language school in Beirut which was then reopened.

Q: I might add that I have interviewed both Bill Crawford and Mike Sterner.

WOLLE: The situation at Aden was that it was still a Crown Colony. Bill Crawford's job for the totality of his assignment, which I think was 1956-59, was fascinating because from Aden he was responsible for not only the Crown Colony, but the Aden Protectorates, Yemen and British Somaliland across the water. So he traveled to one place or the other frequently. He and his number two, which I became in the fall of 1958, rotated trips up into Yemen, staying at the Imam's guest house in Taiz for perhaps ten, fifteen days, perhaps three weeks, at a time. And after returning, about three weeks later the other officer would go up and spend some time. So it was a fascinating post having such a mix of responsibilities.

In my particular case, though it turned out to be an assignment of about nine-ten months of duration. For the last several months of my assignment I had another hat to wear myself, which was to be responsible for our relations, few as they were, with Oman. In fact I was up in the guest house of the Imam in Taiz decoding a message on a one-time pad from Bill Crawford down in Aden and couldn't figure out what this one was trying to say. I finally deciphered it and it said that I had been designated to go from Aden to Muscat in mid December, 1958, with Walter Schwinn, our Consul General from Dhahran, in order to accompany him when he signed on behalf of our government the updated Treaty of Amity, Economic Relations and Consular Rights with the Sultan of Oman.

As is perhaps known, Walter Schwinn, over the previous two or three years while at Dhahran, had flown on six or seven occasions to the southern province of Dhofar in Oman usually accompanied by Earl Russell from the Embassy in Beirut to negotiate this updated treaty. But Earl had been transferred from Lebanon and now it was time for the signing. So I had the interesting experience of not only going with Mr. Schwinn to the treaty signing and the pouring of wax, but also meeting the old Sultan.

A month or two later, accompanied by my wife, I flew to spend a few days in Dhofar and a few days in Muscat to meet some of the officials and the very tiny American community. That was a winter in which Washington had decided to open a consulate at Muscat.

They had gone so far as to ship from the US the physical things needed to open the office...desk, paper and supplies. I was told to look around for an appropriate site for the consulate, something to rent.

Well, just before I left Aden to go over there, about January, 1959, the decision had been made in Washington not to open in Muscat but instead to open a legation in Taiz, Yemen. But I couldn't tell the people in Muscat anything about that, since that fact was still confidential. So we were welcomed by a red carpet treatment by the American missionaries in Muscat, them thinking that an American consulate would soon be in their midst. And to this day I feel quite guilty knowing as I did that these supplies were going to be reshipped to go to Yemen instead of Oman.

Q: By the way there has been an interview done with Walter Schwinn which we have on his negotiations. It is quite interesting.

WOLLE: Did he tell you about the ring?

Q: I can't remember, would you relate it?

WOLLE: The signing, I think was on December 20, 1958 He was flown by a small ARAMCO airplane down to Muscat, picked me up and we flew to Dhofar where the Sultan was spending all those years. The night before we headed out from the Cities Service Oil Company guest camp to be taken to the signing at the Palace he had said, “Don't let me forget my signet ring because when the wax is poured on I want to make an impression with my signet ring.” And wouldn't you know, he forgot it, I forgot to remind him and he didn't realize it until it was too late. So no impression could be made on the wax. As I say, he never blamed me and I was grateful.

Q: What was the situation in Aden? It is a little hard to go back to that time but Aden seemed to have these multiplicities of governments which take off in different directions and only one city there.

WOLLE: The Colony, the Eastern Protectorate, Western Protectorate, within each Protectorate several different rulers and home rule everywhere it seemed. The British, of course, were not just under the counter but were officially in control in the Colony and they had the Protectorates. So most everywhere I went, the people I had to deal with were British officials, Colonial officials. Aden was then a very quiet, very hot place. Politically, I don't think there was very much interest at that time but it wasn't too many years before lots of trouble developed.

My work during the times I was in Aden was focused on economic/commercial matters. We had an American consular officer. Bill Crawford himself did the majority of the political reporting and contacts with Governor Sir William Luce. I found it was interesting but didn't much more then get my feet wet because the total length of my tour was only about nine months.

Q: How did you find Yemen in those days?

WOLLE: Well, Yemen was really fascinating because first of all the trip up was precarious. We used Jeep station wagons. The drivers we had at the Embassy were Yemeni, and they went all out. If we had let them do all the driving, we probably would have been bounced out, so consequently we did some of the driving ourselves. The old Imam was still the government in Taiz. That was where he made his capital, not up north in Sanaa. In fact, I never got up to Sanaa. While we were in Taiz, as his guests, we took up our own food, etc. The living was quite different.

We were dealing heavily with two or three of his top officials. Foreign Minister Qadi al-Amri was one. I have vivid memories of a couple of meetings with him along with Bill Crawford, and one or two on my own later. By the way, al-Amri was killed in a plane crash in Italy a year or so after those days.

The most vivid memory I have is of being in the market in downtown Taiz one day when suddenly two or three open vehicles with machine guns mounted and triggers at the ready came rolling down the main street and in the midst of this little caravan was a Jeep, perhaps a Land Rover, with the old Imam, himself. He was a fierce looking character. He looked like he would be ready to pluck your eyes out at the drop of a hat.

The city was very, very undeveloped. I had the unique experience while I was up there of signing a lease for two buildings. Now the reason why we signed the lease for two buildings to open the Legation, was that we wanted one building and we knew the one we wanted. The landlord was willing to sign, but the Soviet Embassy, which was pretty thick with the Imam's government at that time, was leaving a three-story, decrepit building, rather picturesque, but it looked unsafe, and in order for us to get permission from the Imam's officials to lease the building we wanted, we had to lease the other one as well because its influential owner insisted. So we got the okay from Washington. I guess Bill did some fast talking. So we signed the leases, and the physical transfer of funds for the first year's payment took the form of Maria Theresa thalers. There was no paper currency there.

Q: These were rather large silver...

WOLLE: About twice the size of a silver dollar.

Q: One might say that they were certainly the currency of the area.

WOLLE: That is right. You had to carry a box of heavy money if you wanted to do some shopping.

Well, to sign these leases and turnover the first year's payment, we arranged with a merchant to get him some USG checks and load into our vehicle a whole car full of wooden crates full of these Maria Theresa thalers and then physically carry them to the

business establishments of the landlords and have the payments counted out. The transfer took several hours and some physical work was involved.

Q: As an aside for the record, I think the Maria Theresa thaler was originally during the time of Maria Theresa in Austria but somehow that had become the currency in the Middle East and it was continual although she had been dead for two centuries. It had continued to be produced in a mint in Switzerland, or some place.

WOLLE: Yes, and all bearing the same original year, 1763. I think throughout this Horn of Africa region these coins were in great use and demand.

Q: We still had quite a few of them in Dhahran at the same time. In case of emergencies we had those and gold Napoleons...so you could buy your way out if there were problems.

Yemen was really quite different from the rest of Arabia, wasn't it? I mean it was a fairly fertile area and had a very large population.

WOLLE: Yes, Yemen had a lot of terraced agriculture. In my time they had suffered a serious drought. That fact led to one of the other interesting things I took part in. Due to Washington's interest in getting into closer relationship with the Imam, as evidenced by its decision to open a Legation, we agreed on an AID program with Yemen. We were going to ship them some PL 480 wheat. We did so, which would be a story in itself, but which I can't tell because I wasn't present when this wheat actually arrived. But on one of my official visits to Yemen, my driver and another colleague from the Embassy in Aden and myself, all went down on another rickety old road to the port of Mocha, nearly abandoned but famous for coffee shipping in the older days, because we had learned that the American ship bearing the first shipment of PL 480 relief flour would be arriving off Mocha at a certain date. So we went down and were greeted very courteously. But we searched the horizon all through the next day and nothing appeared. Somehow I got word that Bill Crawford in Aden had had later news that the ship had been delayed by a week or ten days. So I never did see that flour. But I did see later some fascinating color

photographs taken by an AID transportation expert named Dick Williams, who at a slightly later point flew into Aden, went up to Mocha and supervised the unloading of that first cargo of flour, which had to be done on the backs of Yemeni laborers wading out into the water to take these sacks of flour off lighters with the ship hanging a few miles off shore. In a way it was sort of a race because we were trying to land our relief shipment before the Russian relief shipment arrived. And we succeeded despite the delay.

In fact, on a subsequent trip, maybe my last one up into Taiz, I stopped along the roadside and talked a bit with a Yemeni farmer. We mentioned that American relief flour had arrived in the country and we were happy to be able to help the country in its time of need. His response was something like this, “Well, Imam hasn't given me my share yet.” And I think that sort of characterizes the feeling at that time among so many of the Yemenis. They felt a personal tie with the very autocratic ruler they had. This is common in Arabia: a feeling of a personal relationship between the subject and the ruler no matter how many levels there are in between. In Saudi Arabia the King accepts individual petitions.

Q: I think this is something that is often overlooked when we talk about parliamentary democracy, that we fail to realize that there is almost the equivalent of a town meeting type process going on in parts of that world.

WOLLE: And I think a lot of the citizens in those countries feel that.

Q: What did we feel about...the Chinese weren't in there at that time were they?

WOLLE: As I recall the Chinese were not there yet, I may be mistaken.

Q: Anyway, how did we feel about the Soviet competition? What was our concern and how did this take place?

WOLLE: The Soviets had been there with some sort of an aid program and presence for at least a few years. We had not. As far as what developed after we got in with our

Legation...I think it was Chuck Ferguson who was the first officer in charge there...I can't say much about it because I was transferred out of Aden by July.

For our part that winter and on those trips up to Yemen we really had little if any contact with the Soviets and the contacts that we had with the top Yemeni officials seemed to indicate to us that at least some of them, if not most of them, were trying to maneuver the situation in a way that they could decrease Soviet influence and begin to rely more on Western help.

Q: Can we talk a little about Aden. Aden turned into a very nasty place. It is often forgotten but it was as bad as Cyprus or almost anywhere else before the British finally got out of there. You said it was relatively quiet, but were you getting contact with potential dissident groups?

WOLLE: I don't think we were getting very much, no. Curiously one of our local employees in the Embassy was very close and involved in one of the local dissident groups. I think Bill Crawford was relying in a small part at least on what he was hearing through this source. But we certainly didn't have the feeling that things were going to blow up. We thought the British would stay on for some time to come. They were the experts in dealing with all the various rulers. They still had them gathering in London for their summer vacations.

Both Aden and Yemen were so far removed from the Arab-Israel scene that, just as I found later in Oman, they are so wrapped up in their own problems that most of the population has very little feeling for the Arab-Israel problem. They spend very little time bending your ear about it. Just the opposite from the situation, say, in Jordan.

Q: Even in Saudi Arabia it kept coming up all the time. Were there any problems that we were getting at all involved in at that time? Boundary disputes between Yemen and Saudi Arabia or anything like that?

WOLLE: From Aden at that time we really weren't. In the incoming messages we were reading about some of these boundary disputes.

Q: At the time that we were there...I was in Saudi Arabia most of that time...the British and the Saudis didn't have diplomatic relations because of the dispute over the Buraimi Oasis which is up near your later hangout the United Emirates.

WOLLE: Right. And I might say that there was at that time, 1958-59, nothing foretelling what later became a violent struggle between South Yemen and Oman in the Dhofar area. That came along nearly a decade later.

Q: Did you get to British Somaliland?

WOLLE: No.

Q: Bill Crawford was your boss. I wonder if you could characterize him because he was later Ambassador to the Yemen and to Cyprus?

WOLLE: I am a great admirer of Bill Crawford and I don't say that because you suddenly ask me that question. I felt he was doing a marvelous job in Aden balancing all these balls in the air. I said to people for years thereafter that I never met an officer of roughly my grade who surpassed Bill Crawford in terms of effectiveness. He went on from that job to Director of Arabian Peninsula Affairs. I certainly came to realize in contacts with the British officials in Aden, that they had an extremely high regard for Bill as the American Consul there. They felt he was very wise, he wasn't stepping on their toes, and his judgment and his ability to look ahead and figure out what might happen was something they valued. So for a good many years after that I stayed in close touch with Bill Crawford.

Q: You left Aden and went to Jeddah where you served from 1959-1962. What were you doing, what was your job in Jeddah?

WOLLE: Throughout my time there I was the chief of the economic/commercial section. I had a colleague officer working with me, who concentrated on commercial matters and helped out on some other things, and an American secretary. We had one local employee who was obviously vital because of the importance of Arabic and particularly in checking through the press and written sources so that we didn't miss anything like that.

It was an interesting period in Saudi Arabia's history. The 1958-60 period, and I arrived in the middle of that, they were going through a financial retrenchment. King Saud had allowed spending to get out of hand in the middle 1950s and more and more he realized, was convinced by others in the family, that he should turn more authority over to Crown Prince Faisal. He did that in 1958-60 and he got into the country an expert financial administrator, a Pakistani named Anwar Ali, a Muslim. He was really vital to their recovery. He got along well with those he dealt with on the Saudi side, and foreigners, and helped put the financial picture back into focus.

Also through the influence of Crown Prince Faisal, who was really managing many of the country's affairs in that period, he got the World Bank to come in and do its first major report on Saudi Arabia. It came out in 1960 and led to the country's first effort to plan an economic development program. It began as a small Economic Development Committee. There was a young Saudi, Ahmad Jamjoom, at the under secretary level, who had this committee sort of in his hand to figure out how to get started with development. Before they went too far along, a royal fiat turned this into a more formal organization called the Supreme Planning Board. That got started in December 1960 and used the World Bank report which had just come out to plan for some movement in transportation, in agriculture, and to help some of the small industries.

Of course, up to that time probably the main impetus to start the industrial side had been ARAMCO (the Arabian American Oil Company). But that was heavily in the eastern province.

It was an important time for such action because the spending was back under control and the oil income was rising. (We can look back now and say gradually rising because the figures look so low when we look back thirty years. For example, the annual Saudi budget in dollar terms in 1961 was slightly under $400 million and then it jumped to $480 million the next year and went up and up after that.) So now those figures look minuscule, but they were enough to let the government organize things.

There was still a lot of reliance on a few Western advisers. The Ministries, which for the most part were up in Riyadh, were really still spending as much time trying to get themselves organized as they were in trying to help the country along.

Fortunately for my work, you might say, two of the really key departments in the government remained in Jeddah in that period. One was the Ministry of Petroleum and Mineral Affairs. Also there remained in Jeddah Anwar Ali, the Pakistani financial administrator, who headed what was called the Saudi Arabian Monetary Agency, which in effect was sort of a Ministry of Finance. So pretty much throughout my time, my two main contacts were the Ministry of Petroleum and Mineral Affairs and the Monetary Agency, and I could get access to them right where I lived instead of having to travel up to Riyadh to spend a few days.

I think the main lesson that I learned through this experience in Jeddah was that in a country which is large in expanse but very underdeveloped, to do the right kind of reporting and put in advice now and then, you really have to get close to the key figures who have their fingers on the buttons that count. Abdullah Tariki, a very controversial character, was the Minister of Petroleum through most of this period. We got along very well so he became an excellent source as did Anwar Ali. It was just a situation where to find out what was really going on and to have discussions at the level that counted you really had to deal with the top people and in the economic field those were the two key people. I considered it a very fortunate assignment.

Q: What was your impression of Tariki? He had been educated in Colorado wasn't it?

WOLLE: I believe it was Colorado. As I learned it at the time he had become engaged and I believe married an American girl during that period or just after his school days. But it didn't work out, so one theory was that he was at times anti-American, anti-Western in some of his talk, if not his action, due to disillusionment and unhappiness because of a romance that didn't work out. But I don't know if there is really truth in that. He was a very volatile kind of guy. He gave ARAMCO a hard time on many matters that they were constantly negotiating.

He was one of the founders, along with a Venezuelan, Perez Alfonso, of OPEC in 1960, I believe it was. They really hatched this thing that has had a long history and a life of its own to try to gain, more rapidly then the companies wanted in most producing countries, more authority and control over their own industry and particularly to get their own governments involved in more then just production...refining, marketing, transportation, etc.

Tariki was quite approachable. He would sit there picking his toes and being very hospitable. I remember once when I accompanied Howard Cottam, then Deputy Assistant Secretary for NEA, to Riyadh. I saw Tariki across the hotel lobby when we checked in. He was as warm as he could be saying that as soon as we got checked in to come up and have a chat. I smiled to myself because I figured I had made this impression on Howard Cottam...here is a guy who gets in to see Tariki. But that was all part of the job.

Howard Cottam, by the way, at that time was the highest ranking State Department official to have visited Saudi Arabia, at least since World War II. In the years that followed all kinds of Secretaries and others from State and Treasury have been there.

Q: As the economic officer, what were American interests in Saudi Arabia and did they clash with ARAMCO's interests?

WOLLE: Well, frankly, they did not seem to clash. We wanted first to try to be sure that the Saudis did pull their boot straps up financially, stop some of the wilder spending that had been allowed and begin a rational kind of economic development. We felt that ARAMCO was basically on the right track. They certainly had an excellent reputation for dealing with their Saudi employees. They were bringing at least a good many of them along toward responsible positions in the company.

It wasn't that there were constant clashes on issues up and down the line between ARAMCO and the Saudi government, some of it was just the volatile nature of Tariki. He would speak to the international press and start some of these international efforts such as getting OPEC off the ground. I think we feared that he might have an influence on some of the other oil producers that would perhaps be a bit adverse...try to take over too much too soon.

ARAMCO's philosophy all along, I am convinced, was basically to bring the Saudi employees along as fast as they could...they sent many of them to the States and Europe for technical and other kinds of education. ARAMCO knew that it was so important to the Saudi economy that they had to be very careful whatever they did.

Q: Part of this time I was laughably the economic/ commercial officer in the eastern province, but I also used to cover Bahrain, Qatar and the Trucial States and you would get the contrast between ARAMCO, which was really saying that these are Arabs in an Arab country and as long as we get a good cut of the pie lets bring them along. You would go over and talk to the British people at BAPCO or others, and one had the feeling that this was a British concern and it didn't want these natives mucking things up. It was much more confrontational. They seemed to despise ARAMCO for letting their side down. I got this impression.

WOLLE: I can understand your comments precisely. Also having just come from Aden which was still a British colony...a different situation but still one could see there that the

British were just calling all the shots and really trying to keep a lid on rather than trying to help educate the Adenis very much. So I think it was a good philosophy on ARAMCO's part.

Q: It seemed to work. One that was very compatible with the American style of doing things.

WOLLE: And, of course, as you know, in 1957 in connection with renewing the Dhahran airfield agreement for five years we provided, I think, $25 million to help improve Dammam Port and also build an air terminal at Dhahran airport.

Q: The Army Corps of Engineers was responsible for that.

WOLLE: Less then five years later we were out because there was no subsequent renewal and in 1962 we evacuated our military from Dhahran.

Q: Did you find in your dealings with the Saudis could they understand that we really...we had this very peculiar policy with the Saudis, we were very close to them but at the same time we were the prime supporter of what they at that time considered to be their bitterest enemy, the Israelis. When you got past the rhetoric, did they understand the political situation and why this was going on?

WOLLE: Well, at least in my work, economic and commercial work and contacts, the Israeli business wasn't a big bugaboo for us. For the political section of the Embassy, there was more involvement in that and more static, because there were several key bureaucrats in the Saudi government, individuals who were Palestinian and who had come to and been in the kingdom pretty much since 1947-48, who certainly didn't let their Saudi co-workers forget that this was a major issue and that while the US was generous in bilateral relations, it was still a country that had to be watched very carefully because of its role in the Arab-Israeli problem.

For example, just by contrast, in Jordan later even in my economic and AID contacts, the Israeli issue was constantly the major subject of discussion and we were criticized roundly, etc. That was a big contrast with my own experience in Saudi Arabia where it was not a problem that seemed to affect my work very much.

Q: How did we feel about Nasserism? Nasserism was still big at this time. What was your impression and the feel of the Embassy as far as militant Arab nationalism was concerned?

WOLLE: Again, I think the period when that really became an impact in Saudi Arabia was shortly after I was transferred back to the Department, because I think it was in the 1962-63 year that all this stuff broke loose. The squabble over the covering for the Ka'aba (religious shrine at Mecca); the Egyptian air raids into western Saudi Arabia; the Yemen exploding with the unseating of the Imam.

Q: How did you feel and others in the Embassy about the survivability of the House of Saud and all? At the time you were mentioning there were an awful lot of Palestinians around including the military service. I know out in the eastern province we weren't that close, but there was concern about what the military might do and also the Palestinian influence.

WOLLE: Yes, there was concern, but my gut feeling at the time was that this was such a unique kind of country with such traditional approaches to government, religion, etc. that it was not going to be in the near future or even middle term that the House of Saud would fall, provided those in charge spent the money more wisely and didn't go into great debt. And provided they kept a proper eye on the military. Of course the theory abounded that as fast as the Saudis would built up their regular army they would built up the so called white army, the bedouin army, and keep ammunition restricted so that their wasn't an opening for a military coup.

By contrast, I can remember feeling much later on in Oman in the middle 1970s when Sultan Qaboos had been ruling for just a few years...Gee, what is going to happen to this country when the Omanis who are being educated abroad come back in the middle 1980s? This country doesn't have that much oil and doesn't have that much to develop. The Sultan may be in for real trouble maintaining a grip. Whereas I really thought Saudi Arabia would manage to maintain the monarchy pretty much indefinitely.

Q: Did you have problems, I know I certainly did, with some of the conflicts that came between sort of normal American business practices and the Islamic Law? You probably recall the case of Robert Tuma who was the Pillsbury flour salesman.

WOLLE: Yes, when you mentioned Pillsbury I had it in my mind. But such cases seemed to be centered over in the eastern province rather than over where we were. So we left too much for you poor people in the Consulate General to do what you could to bale out persons in those conditions where they had been, what, tossed into jail?

Q: No, in this case, Robert Tuma was a salesman from Pillsbury and some Saudis had a claim against Pillsbury, not against Tuma and they wouldn't let him out of the country until the claims were settled or somebody stood bond for him, which eventually was worked out. But screams and yells of holding just a company representative in the country caused a lot of friction.

WOLLE: We really didn't have such celebrated cases that I can recall in the Jeddah region. Cases of that type came up during my time in Oman, when the Omani government would tend to get unhappy with somebody and give him 24 hours to leave. The main American business endeavor near Jeddah was TWA's role in Saudi Arabian Air Lines. TWA was still vital to provide management and flying personnel for the Saudis as it had done in Ethiopia earlier. Eventually they worked themselves out of a job. There was a regular TWA compound, as we called it, near the airport, and a good many pilots, maintenance personnel and administrators. The elementary school, which our nursery

age daughter attended, was known as the TWA school, because most of the American children, or many of them, were in that part of the American community, with the airline.

Anyway a very interesting tour with two distinctly different ambassadors.

Q: Could you first talk about Donald Heath and then there was Parker Hart...their style of operation and how they dealt?

WOLLE: Well, in a way one was old school and one was new modern. I had come to know Ambassador Heath somewhat in Lebanon when I was in Arabic school because he was Ambassador while I was there. He had later been transferred to Saudi Arabia for his third or fourth ambassadorship.

Q: He had been in Saigon, also Minister in Sofia, etc.

WOLLE: He did not have a tremendous knowledge of the Arabian Peninsula. He did things by the book delegating freely, relied heavily on his DCM for day-to-day matters, maintained very good contacts with key people in the royal family, and frequently flew back and forth to see the king and others if they were up in Riyadh. But I don't think the contrast between him and Ambassador Hart was so much in the style of their operation as in the prior knowledge or lack of it that each one brought to the post.

In other words, Ambassador Heath did not have a big background in the Middle East or in the Arabian Peninsula. Ambassador Hart did have. He had opened the Consulate in Dhahran. He had known a lot of the Saudi persons who counted, including some of the merchant families way back. I say way back, at least 15 years earlier. So he could draw on that and was off to a running start. You really had to know your stuff to talk with him about the tribal relationships and such things.

I think they were both effective and both did admirably. Of course Ambassador Heath retired from that post and Pete Hart had a good many years in front of him still.

Q: Then you went to the Bureau of Economic Affairs from 1962-65, is that right?

WOLLE: Not in that bureau, but in NEA—first in what we then called the Office of Near East Economic Affairs (NEA/E), which was a four officer contingent headed much of my time by Enoch Duncan. That was for 3 years, then for a year I was the officer in charge of Arab-Israel Affairs, with Lucien Kinsolving assisting me. Then in mid-1966 when the country director system got started in the State Department, I in effect moved across the hall and became deputy to Harry Symmes, later Roy Atherton, Harry being the first Country Director for Israel and Arab-Israel Affairs. In all that totaled five years and then my sixth year in Washington was as a student at the National War College.

Q: On the economic side what were you concentrating on in Near Eastern Affairs?

WOLLE: We were concentrating on things that involved mostly countries in the Arabian Peninsula, Iraq and Egypt. I, myself, dealt very little with Egypt, Fran Dickman was handling that. One of the interesting things during that period was simply following some of the efforts I had seen get started on the ground in Saudi Arabia.

Between 1962-64 we were approached by the Saudi government to help them get some of their development works underway. For example, they wanted the road network radically improved. They wanted television installed in the kingdom. They wanted an increase in the survey effort which the US Geological Survey had started many years before, along with ARAMCO...it was a joint mapping and exploration effort. So to make a long story short we got the US Army Corps of Engineers to establish a presence in Saudi Arabia to oversee contracts and contracting work in some of these fields. The 1960s became a period of gradually greater US involvement with the Saudi development effort.

With Iraq there was the annual question of date infestation: whether or not Iraqi exports entering this country measured up to standards in terms of bug and waste infestation.

Every year this topic required substantial negotiations between ourselves and the Iraqi Embassy which feared we would suddenly lower the boom on the Iraqi date exports.

Q: Iraq had always had this potential of being the great economic powerhouse of the Middle East, but they seemed to be plagued and continue to be with having dictatorial regimes that drive it to the ground. Have we written Iraq off almost as an economic...?

WOLLE: At that time?

Q: Yes, the time we are talking about.

WOLLE: No, there were some large American construction firms involved through the sixties in building large dams in the northern part of Iraq...Morrison-Knudsen, J. A. Jones and some others. From time to time they would come in and need some kind of representation from us or through our Embassy if they were having problems. Also the road network in Iraq was in part engineered and designed and to some degree constructed by American firms.

But the Iraqis were...let's say they had educated officials who could deal with their development much more readily than the case of the Saudis who had very few engineers and the like, and really wanted the US to be interceding there to make sure that they were not being ripped off by American, European or other contractors.

Q: Did you find this a problem? I mean when there are oil wells, all the sharks gather. Did you find yourself in an awkward position? We didn't want the Saudis to be ripped off by anybody, including American firms, but what about a firm that you thought was a good American firm with congressional backing... ?

WOLLE: It is hard of me to think of examples at this point, but I can recall some hours spent with my colleagues helping to draft congressional responses in cases where an American firm had gone to the Hill and we had either an embarrassing kind of letter

or a very delicate kind of situation to respond to. In a sense we were a third party out there helping to mediate in a way between the Saudi government and American or other contractors trying to get bids, particularly after the Corps of Engineers set up shop there.

Q: Then you moved over to Arab-Israeli Affairs which I would consider one of the most difficult jobs in the Department. How did you feel about doing this?

WOLLE: It was a sharp change for me. I looked forward to it.

We left out a short period, but we won't have to talk about it. Between my Near East Economic assignment and the Arab-Israel job, there was a period of about six months to a year when I was actually assigned to the Arabian Peninsula Desk. My work there was closely related to what I had been doing in NEA/E.

For that one year, 1965-66, Arab-Israel affairs were dominated by organized Arab guerrilla raids into Israel. We were trying to persuade the Israelis not to retaliate, that it was counterproductive. Of course, that was always difficult to do and we rarely succeeded. As soon as the reports came in, the Israeli Embassy in Washington (extremely active and extremely competent) was very quick to give us their view of what had happened and the fact that so and so many had been killed or injured, or whatever. There was usually some hint of military retort. I can remember several of those incidents that winter and in the succeeding year that led up to the 1967 war.

A more placid subject of interest, particularly to the Israelis at that time, was the whole Jordan waters question. I am sort of amused because today's Washington Post started a series of three articles on water in the Middle East and across borders. At that time, of course, various plans for the division of the waters were on the shelf.

Q: The Johnston Plan...

WOLLE: The Eric Johnston Plan and variations of it had been...we had gone through that. But the Israeli Embassy was very interested in touching base with us and getting our understanding of what the water situation was...who was getting what. So I had to brief myself and get very familiar with that so. Harry Symmes, my immediate boss and I sat down every few months with Efriam Evron, who was the number two in the Israeli Embassy, and updated each other on everything we knew in terms of water sources, water usage, raids that might have affected the status quo...whether or not a retaliation raid against Jordan's East Ghor project was in their mind or not. That sort of thing.

Q: How did you find working in this atmosphere? First as an Arabist did you find that in dealing with the Israelis that you were immediately the object of suspicion because it seems like there has been a policy for a long time on the Israeli side of branding in the American mind Arabists as somehow being anti-Semitic, not liking Israel, etc? Did you find this a problem?

WOLLE: Yes, there has been that and it is written up still now and then in the press. I really felt for the most part Foreign Service officers who had been trained in Arabic or served in the Arab world, or both, looked at things very objectively and the criticism, either from Capitol Hill or from Jewish organizations in this country or from the Israeli Embassy people, was not justified. I have to admit that there were a few officers who did become pretty one-sided on the issue. And it would be fair enough to tab them as pro-Arab, anti-Israel, or even pro-Israel, anti-Arab. But I think that is a distinct minority and I found that my 1965-67 colleagues could deal quite readily and comfortably with Arab and Israeli Embassy people without feeling that they were suspicious of where we were coming from.

I felt that I could honestly deal with them objectively. They were, of course, very persuasive and very effective and very determined, particularly on the Israeli side, to put forward their view point, and much of it had a lot of merit. But I didn't really feel that my

usefulness as a US government official was affected in any way by any prejudice on my part.

Q: Did you find though that say in dealing with the Israelis or Congress that the fact that you were an Arabist was being used as a weapon against you...you are saying that because you are an Arabist, etc.?

WOLLE: I really didn't find that at my level. My Congressional dealings were largely limited to replying to correspondence.

Q: Did you find that you had to be very careful what you wrote or said because one of the things, I have never dealt with but heard in the corridors...anything dealing with Israel gets leaked to Congress, gets leaked to the media, gets leaked to the Israeli Embassy almost before it can get to the action officer. Did you find this a problem?

WOLLE: No. Maybe, who knows, I was influenced and became somewhat more in their camp than I realized. I say that because I was getting invitations now and then to speak, particularly at Zionist Organization of America (ZOA), gatherings. I can remember flying to Long Island, to Atlanta, to Chicago, to Los Angeles, the main reason being invitations from the ZOA to speak at one of their large meetings. Not generally as the sole speaker, but taking part in a parade of speakers and discussion.

There was a moment when I thought either I am not as balanced as I think or else I am simply a better speaker than I thought because when I finished my first presentation, the initial ZOA gathering, the moderator, who was a ZOA organizer, slipped a little note over to me almost before the clapping, such as there was, died down. It read ...Can you join us also at the following ZOA gatherings at Atlanta, Boston, etc. I thought my God, what did I say?

Anyway I found those occasions...which usually also involved two or three other appearances during the same two or three days, like on a college campus, etc....very,

very useful in doing my work because of the questions that are raised. There is always something that somehow you didn't think of in that light, so you go back to the Department and give it a little thought. And also just the live audience experience, of course, is very good for somebody who is otherwise much tied to the desk in Washington.

Of course, on those occasions sometimes they would have the State Department representative there as the fall guy. There would usually be one speaker very enthusiastically pro-Israel, perhaps an academic. And then there would be one who was sort of half and half, maybe. And then there would be the State Department guy. The audience would naturally interpret his remarks as pro-Arab..

Q: How about Congress? Did you find that Congress was difficult to deal with?

WOLLE: I recall once going up as an aide to Ray Hare who had become Assistant Secretary. The subject for that hearing, I think it was an Edward Kennedy subcommittee, was UNRWA and refugees. Not a popular thing in Congress because it is almost like a rat hole you keep pouring money in and what do you see, since negotiations don't seem to get anywhere. He had a tough row to hoe that day in the hearing. I was only turning his pages and putting up some graphics on the easel. The subcommittee was interested in the humanitarian side too, so it wasn't just a political topic.

The key issues, such as arms sales or possible negotiations, were handled at a higher level than officer in charge of Arab-Israel affairs. It was higher up in NEA and might involve other bureaus. No lowly Desk officer is going to make policy on Arab-Israel matters, but if you go at it at the right way you can put an oar in now and then by rendering advice to your bosses.

Q: You were there when they inserted an Office Director. Did you find this a duplication of effort?

WOLLE: I never did make up my mind on that. In the case of NEA/IAI, our country directors had sufficient stature that they could deal directly with the Assistant Secretary on lots of things rather than going through the deputy level. So I don't think the new system harmed us.

Q: Were you there during the June 1967 war?

WOLLE: Yes, and two months after that I went off to the War College.

Q: What was the impact? Did this come as a surprise, how this developed?

WOLLE: Not so much because in the preceding weeks all signs pointed to hostilities.

Q: There was the insistence on the withdrawal of the UN buffer, etc.

WOLLE: Yes. So it wasn't a flat surprise as 1973 was. There were all kinds of phone calls, briefings, a constant parade of callers. More than anything else, I recall writing memos of conversation when foreign ambassadors would come in and be seen upstairs by either Eugene Rostow or, at least, the Assistant Secretary for NEA. It was hard to keep up with the pace of all of these. And, of course, there were some group briefings for resident ambassadors given by Rostow, mostly.

I guess the thing that stands out in my mind was that I was present up in Secretary Rusk's office when he confronted Israeli Ambassador Avraham Harman with the news of the Liberty, the US communications ship that was attacked by Israeli aircraft without warning. I must say Secretary Rusk gave it to him pretty good. That was one of those occasions when as you hear it happen...the charges and responses... you think it will stick in your mind forever. But of course it won't. So you look back and wish you had had a tape in your pocket. You could play it back for about ten minutes of the discussion and get a feel for how a Secretary of State deals with crucial emergencies such as that. I still read anything

and everything I can about the Liberty. It still comes up now and then...survivor reunions, etc.

Q: What was the analysis at that time of why this happened?

WOLLE: Well, at that meeting, of course, on the Israeli Ambassador's part, he was pretty much in the dark...if he wasn't at least he played it that way. “Well, there must be some mistake. We would never...” But our reports were devastating. The feeling of those of us at the working level in NEA was that the Israelis had deliberately done this so that we couldn't read all of their communications, etc. We are their ally but they are not going to trust us when it comes to a wartime situation in terms of what information might get out, what we might pass along to someone. We all felt it was no accident.

Q: Did you find in the weeks following the Six Day War that there was a change in our attitude towards Israel?

WOLLE: Frankly, what I felt was that there was a heck of a lot of work...there were letters, visitors, callers ...and I was trying to clear out of the office. About a week after this happened I needed some kind of relaxation, so I went to a Washington Senators baseball game and wouldn't you know it turned out to be something like 25 innings. I got home about 4:30 in the morning. I think it was the longest night game in American League history and the Senators won in the last inning.

It was just a lot of work and I really can't say that I felt any change in attitude. It was, of course, a big Israeli triumph.

Q: Well, it meant that Israel was there to stay at least for the medium term anyway.

WOLLE: I can recall being with Rodger Davies hosting some foreign diplomat for a briefing when someone brought in a note that the Israelis had agreed to a cease-fire. At that time they were attacking on the Golan heights. Everybody breathed a great sigh of relief.

Q: Anything else on that?

WOLLE: No. Then I spent a year at the National War College. I guess I figured that this was one way to get an onward assignment outside the Arab world for a change. But it didn't work out that way. A phone call came from the Department in the middle of the school year proposing the DCM slot in Kuwait.

Q: You served in Kuwait from 1968-70 as DCM. Who was the ambassador?

WOLLE: Good question. For the first eight or ten months, it was Howard Cottam, whom I had known in Washington and earlier in Saudi Arabia. Then there was a period of four or five months during which I was in charge, before the arrival of John Walsh as Ambassador. That was a real contrast.

Q: Could you talk about both of those?

WOLLE: My view was at the time and remains that Howard Cottam was an extremely effective ambassador in Kuwait. It was his first mission in charge...his retirement from government followed that. He was highly interested and motivated in going to Kuwait. He sort of fell in love with this small country that was developing almost like magic. He right away apparently saw that one of the best things that he could get he, himself, and his staff to concentrate on was, of all things, biographic work. He was tremendous at coming to know the Kuwaiti families and how they were interrelated, and who did what, and who relied on whom.

I can remember that at nearly every staff meeting a good part of it was to encourage more formal biographical reporting. Neither before nor after was I ever at an Embassy where that was given its due. But he was enthusiastic about it...and about everything.

He was close to the American companies that were represented there. His door was always open. He was a hard worker. I felt that he really did a marvelous job in Kuwait.

He also would go on the speaking circuit back in this country whenever he was back on leave, etc. and try to portray this image of a very small, but in its own way a very dynamic country. He was a superb ambassador for Kuwait's interests as well as our own, I thought.

It was a real change though when John Walsh arrived at his first ambassadorial post. He came after several years experience at the upper level of Department 7th Floor administration. I had known him somewhat but not at all well during my years in the 1960s in the Department. He seemed to come with some chips on his shoulder. He was a very proud person and very selfish person. He delighted in keeping visitors waiting. I really couldn't understand it. If I had been an ombudsman at the time I would have had some things to write.

For example, he had been there a couple of weeks and was invited to go down to the Kuwait Oil Company facilities at Ahmadi, a forty-five minute drive to the south, to be their guest for the day...briefings, tour of the oil facilities, luncheon, etc. He deliberately left an hour after he should have and kept them waiting, frankly to show who he was—I am the American Ambassador and you can wait on me, if you want to see me.

The same thing would happen often when visitors would come to the Embassy even for scheduled appointments. I many times would try to keep them pacified. His secretary and I, together, would try. But he just hadn't come up yet from the residence, which was a short walk, about half a block.

I found Western diplomats whom I knew well drawing me aside with questions: What is the matter with your new ambassador? He doesn't seem to treat you or anybody else from the Embassy with the respect he ought to. Things like that.

I think one of his chips was that he was not an Arabist and he had it in for Arabists. He didn't want to be bothered with go-betweens. If there was a language problem, well, he would get around it one way or another.

So, for me, there was such a contrast between the enthusiasm and effectiveness of Ambassador Cottam and suddenly what, at least to me, appeared to be the prideful and selfish approach of Ambassador Walsh. Now, I guess one can say, “Well, I guess the two of you didn't hit it off.” Right.

Anyway, I didn't want to stay in that situation any longer then I had to so after he had been there six or eight months I took advantage of the opportunity of home leave ...the three year tour with home leave in the middle...and went back to Washington. Through NEA contacts I tried to make sure that I could get an onward assignment the summer of 1970 instead of waiting until mid-71.

Some of this, perhaps, could have been excused if one could point to some real accomplishments that Ambassador Walsh made in Kuwait, and maybe there were some that I was blind to, but nobody has come forward to tell me about them as yet.

Q: What was your impression of the royal family and their effectiveness? What was the family's name?

WOLLE: The Sabah family.

Q: Yes, the Sabah family.

WOLLE: It seems that early in the history of Kuwait, a couple of centuries ago, the Sabah family was told that they could govern the place provided they left the commerce, trade and business to the other key families. So the Sabah family agreed and still continues to rule under this unwritten compact. The other families in Kuwait, many of whom have much more highly educated individuals, support the government and go along with it as long as it doesn't step on their commercial interests.

I met very few of the Sabah family who really impressed me as intellectual or efficient individuals in terms of their ability to govern. Some exceptions, but by and large not

outstanding. A couple of the key roles, at least in my time, were usually in the hands of non-Sabah family members.

Q: What about concerns about the Palestinian and Egyptian workers there? We are talking about this 1968-70 period. Was there concern about how they might sort of turn on Kuwait and turn it into another volatile place.

WOLLE: The Kuwaitis, of course, are notorious for not giving citizenship privileges, free education and free this and free that to very many of the foreigners, be they Palestinian or whatever, no matter how many years they have been in the country. Right now in 1992 the Kuwaitis are evicting a lot of the Palestinians, just more or less on principle, feeling that because the PLO took the view it did during the 1991 Gulf War we don't want these people around, although a good many of them probably are more Kuwaiti then the Kuwaitis when it came to resisting Iraqi aggression.

In the years 1968-70, some of the Palestinians were certainly in key positions in government. They were frequent adversaries in conversation about Israel at cocktail parties, but I think they really spent as much time bemoaning the fact that the Kuwaitis were not good enough to them as they did talking about Arab-Israel problems.

The Kuwaitis were rapidly becoming a minority in their own country so they were and remain very cautious about spreading the wealth, privileges and vote. But even in those early years the Kuwaiti Parliament was in existence and was having debates. They were pretty tame. One or two journalists got out of line every now and then and occasionally had their hand slapped, though it was a somewhat freer press then in most of the Arab countries. There was, of course, in the back of the mind concern even then about what Iraq might try again to do one day as it had in 1962.

There was a Soviet Embassy in Kuwait during that period. I think it was the first Arab country in which I had served where there was a Soviet mission, but it didn't seem to be overly aggressive or active. I would say that the most dynamic embassy in Kuwait in those

years was the French. They had come in in a big way, not only in Kuwait but on down the Gulf trying to establish commercial relationships and get some contracts. They were notable for their activity. The British Embassy was the largest and most influential in terms of Kuwaiti internal and foreign affairs.

Q: Were there any major issues?

WOLLE: Between our governments there really were not. The Emir paid a State Visit to the US that first winter, 1968-69. Ambassador Cottam went back to the States for that. There was no focus of attention in Washington on relations with Kuwait.

Locally, the place was jumping: every few months one oil company or another would dedicate a new facility, a new desalination plant, a new refinery. A lot of economic development and but many bilateral concerns really.

Q: Then you left and went to Amman where you served from 1970-73?

WOLLE: Yes. I suppose it was the assignment that was the most exciting and probably the most fruitful for my career in that when I arrived the place was in turmoil because that summer of 1970 the commandos were setting up roadblocks here and there. Before I arrived they had shot and killed through the front door an American assistant military attach#. That, along with other incidents, had caused our government to evacuate families and some non-essential employees to Beirut, for the most part. So I arrived on my own. The family went to live in Beirut.

Within a few weeks came Black September...the three planes that were hijacked and set down by terrorists in the desert forty miles or so east of Amman. Our Ambassador, Harry Symmes had been PNGed and removed from the country a few months earlier. Harry O'Dell was the Charg# when I arrived that summer.

Q: You went as what?

WOLLE: As head of the economic/commercial section. Hume Horan had come in new as the principal political officer. Harry O'Dell's tour was running out and he had been through a lot of problems there in the last two or three years and really needed relief. I can't recall the exact timetable of these events but in any case Dean Brown was appointed that summer as ambassador to replace Ambassador Symmes. He was not scheduled to arrive until perhaps October. Bill Brubeck had been designated as the new DCM, but again was not to arrive until approximately October. But as the crisis came to a head...the planes were hijacked and put on the ground...Harry O'Dell left the post, signed it over to me. But the Department in its wisdom advanced the arrival of Bill Brubeck so that my Charg#ship was in effect overnight...twenty-four hours.

Bill came in and within a week or so Ambassador Brown was sent in early as well. But the passengers were freed from the airplanes after a few days and there were some wild scenes back in the city on their arrival. The international press was focusing in on Jordan.

Tension was still rising between the king and the commandos. So all of a sudden we got the word one evening in mid-September that all of the Americans who were still there were to gather at two or three relatively safe housing locations and remain there until further orders. I think the word had been passed to our Ambassador that the king had had enough of this situation of two governments in one country and was giving the commandos a deadline to withdraw.

So there was literally a war in the city for over a week between the commando groups and the king's army. All of our Embassy people were stashed away in three or four locations, those who hadn't been evacuated in time, and sort of sat it out for a few days. Sounds of firing were everywhere. In the end most of us wereevacuated by air to Lebanon once movement about the city was resumed. The Ambassador, Hume Horan and a number of Embassy officers and communicators were kept in place in Jordan...I was told to standby in Beirut for further orders.

Within a few days I got a cable from Ambassador Brown saying that I should plan to come back into Jordan in about a week and that he wanted me to take over temporary control of the AID mission, such as it still was, as well as doing economic/commercial work.

We had had 40 or 50 AID technicians until mid-1970. It was one of our largest AID missions for a number of years...all through the sixties. But it had been reduced to zero in these evacuations. So I went back in and from mid-1970 headed up the rebirth of a different sort of aid program in Jordan as well as the economic side of things.

Of course for the first year families were still in evacuation status. They came back in mid-1971. Starting that fall of 1970, with the help of an AID program officer who was sent out and later on two other experts...one in Jordan Valley agriculture...particularly with the help of the long time local AID staff we began to pump in money to help rebuild the city and the country. Mostly the city, because it had been heavily damaged in this warfare.

So in shots of $5 million at a time the Ambassador and I would get the paperwork done and go over and sit with the Jordanian ministers, and planning board. I think we did this three times. Gradually we got a couple of other things started. We restarted the student education program, mostly to send Jordanians up to the American University of Beirut for various types of specialty. The Jordan Valley development program was reborn to a certain extent. We did this very, very gradually and without more than a couple of AID personnel in country because Ambassador Brown knew there had been such a risk to American personnel through the spring and summer of 1970 he was going to run the Embassy on a very lean basis. We had some TDY people from Washington from time to time.

All in all it was very interesting because on the economic side I was in touch with the Finance Ministry and Central Bank. Those two in particular had some very good Jordanian leadership and in effect were trying to put the country back on a working basis, after a

few years and particularly a concentrated summer of near anarchy in terms of running the government.

Q: Going back to this, you arrived just about the time when these three planes were put down. When they came down how did you see it in the Embassy?

WOLLE: First of all we wondered where the heck is this place where they were supposedly landing. These were big 707s.

When that was actually in progress we were at the Ambassador's Residence, then unoccupied, having a farewell party for Harry O'Dell who was due to leave that night. Vague reports kept coming over from the Embassy, which was at that time a mile and a half away. But they were garbled and indefinite as to exactly how many planes, where the spot was. Meanwhile the military attach# was out doing some reconnoitering trying to figure it all out. But it was the dead of night so they couldn't imagine where these large planes had been set down on the desert like that. Dawson's field turned out to be the site, an old RAF landing strip not on the maps. It was sort of confused to say the least.

Q: As this developed, was this seen as sort of a gauntlet tossed down to Hussein or just happened?

WOLLE: The way it seemed to us, Amman had gone through a summer with danger on every corner. Several Embassy persons had been stopped at road blocks and had their vehicles stolen by commandos. The army was simply not in control of the city and wasn't preventing these forays, road blocks, wild shootings now and again. We would be working in the Embassy in its old location up on what they call Jebel Luwebdeh and all of a sudden you would duck under your desk because you would hear shots in the vicinity from time to time. Not daily, but frequently.

So the way we looked at it, the king had simply come to the end of his patience and had decided he had to face up to this challenge and rely on the loyalty of his army to push the

commando groups not only out of the city but out of the refugee camps that surrounded the city on a couple of sides. So a lot of the firing that we heard during the week of the full scale, warlike conditions, was Jordanian army artillery firing at refugee camps and, I am sure, doing damage far beyond getting at the commandos, some of who were taking refuge in the camps.

After this ended there was a distinct sense of relief among the foreign population and I think among the Jordanians generally that most of them had come through this ...there were a lot of scars in the city, buildings, but the commandos were completely evicted from the capital and within a few months were evicted from the country. A lot of them fled up into the hills around Jarash up towards the Syrian border.

By mid-1971, the situation had been peaceful for several months and the dependents all came back and the country began to do more then just try to restore the buildings and homes.

Q: Was there concern during this time that the Syrians might move in or that the Israelis might make a move?

WOLLE: Well, there was during this seven or ten day period when the conflict was at its height. We at the “safe” homes were just getting whatever news our radios could pick up or whatever we could get on our walkie talkie system with the Embassy. But, yeah, it was a period when the Syrians were threatening to come across the border with their tanks and the Israelis gave them a few distinct warnings and the Jordanians gave them a few bloody noses in the small battles that did take place.

So it was all settled in that fashion. The Syrians took some hits and were warned to keep out. The Israelis did not occupy additional territory and King Hussein got back in control, first of all his capital and then the forested areas of the north as well. And to this day he has not let things get back into that shape again.

Q: What was the impression of King Hussein when you arrived and as events changed?

WOLLE: Not very good because there didn't seem to be any active control on his part or on the Jordan government's part. The army units would be visible here and there but were not doing anything to regain control from the groups of irregulars. So the shoot-up resulted in September. Jordan's development really took off again in mid-1971 after the initial period of rebuilding of homes and buildings. And the King resumed full charge.

Q: How did you find Dean Brown as an ambassador?

WOLLE: Very decisive. He always seemed to know what he wanted to do. He left no doubt about what he wanted others to do. I don't like to contrast too much, but (recalling Kuwait in 1969) here was another case where an ambassador with little or no previous experience in the Middle East took over. This one, Brown, knew exactly what to do. He knew how to take advantage of the expertise at hand, be it political, economic, administrative or linguistic.

I think we came out very, very well in large part because of his leadership, which, of course, was in extreme contrast with the state the Embassy had been in since Harry Symmes' departure in the early months of the year. DCM Brubeck also was a very decisive kind of a person. He could be controversial in terms of his personal relationships sometimes, a little heavy handed. But a brilliant guy. I think they formed a fine team, although I don't think they were ever that close personally.

Q: You had your first opportunity to look close up at an AID program when you got involved with this. What was your impression? AID has always been quite a controversial thing...not just AID per se, but how it goes about things, how decisions are made and all that.

WOLLE: This was an eye opener. The most valuable thing that we had going was the continued presence of the local staff which was a sliced down local staff. When we had 40

or 50 American technicians in the country I am sure we had 50 to 100 local employees. In my time we had a nucleus of about half a dozen. But they really knew the paper work that had to be done. One of my main impressions was the tremendous amount of red tape, paperwork that is involved, or at least then was involved in an AID program. Without them we couldn't have done it. We would have had to have more Americans coming in. But they wouldn't have done it as well, because these people had worked for the AID mission anywhere from ten to twenty-five years. One was a specialist in training, selecting and sending Jordanians mostly to AUB. One was the controller who knew his stuff backward and forward. There was a program officer who helped us with all the paperwork involved in monetary transfers. Two were experts in PL 480 and technical assistance across the board.

But Ambassador Brown made the point from the very beginning with Washington in late 1970 that we had to keep the profile down. He didn't want a big AID mission to develop again even after security returned. He wanted to do it with just a very few people. He wanted to keep the red tape to a minimum, but yet get results. He succeeded, and we felt we were making progress and not being harassed.

I hardly ever went to a social event or what have you in Jordan but what I would be hit for favors...the word got around that I was now the AID director who could get your son or granddaughter into training or, who knows, even get them a job at the Embassy. So I had a flood of friends all of a sudden who felt somehow I was the one who had all that money in my pocket and it was just a question as to how fast I would give it out.

Q: Did you find that the Jordanians had a pretty good lobby back in the United States?

WOLLE: I didn't get any feeling for that really. They were very likable, the Jordanians. Most Foreign Service people who have served in Jordan find that. I think when you serve in Jordan, right off the bat you tend to be a bit happier because it has a nice climate. You actually have a short spring and a short fall and a real winter. If you come from posts like I

have mostly, around the Peninsula, you suddenly feel that you have a civilized climate so you approach your work with a little extra zip somehow.

Again, just like I found in Saudi Arabia particularly, a few key contacts were indispensable in doing my job. One was Governor of the Central Bank, Dr. Khalil Salim. Bill Brubeck and I passed him back and forth as a contact. And a fellow by the name of Fathi Obaid who was running the Finance Ministry as deputy there. They were very pro-Western and full of information and tips right down to the last detail. I think Obaid had his orders from on high to tell all to the American Embassy so we would extend our full hand more frequently.

So we had good cooperation. And before you know it things were really normal in Jordan. The last two years I was there it was almost as though there had been no problem in 1970. Business was booming again. Everything as before except that our Embassy and particularly the AID mission were drastically streamlined.

When I left, however, in spring of 1973, a more regular AID presence resumed, but it never returned to what was the case in the late fifties and all through the sixties.

Q: To wind up this, you left there before the October 1973 war, obviously.

WOLLE: Yes, but only three weeks before.

Q: You had just six months in Nairobi.

WOLLE: Nine.

Q: What were you doing there?

WOLLE: Again I was to run the economic/commercial section. I had two officers working with me and a secretary. It was an entirely different environment for me. Ralph Lindstrom was Charg# d'affaires when I arrived and remained as such until Tony Marshall, a newly appointed ambassador, came in. Both were very easy to work for, very supportive.

But I expected that it would be a three year tour and was approaching it in that fashion. I can't say that I made a lot of progress because I was trying to establish contacts. And that was difficult. Far more difficult for me, at least, in that environment then in the Arab countries that I had become so accustomed to.

Q: I am surprised. I thought Kenya would be very open.

WOLLE: Well, no. Maybe it was just a matter of needing more time to work on this, but you could see that the government, sort of a tribal based government...the father of the country was still running the show, Jomo Kenyatta. The ministers were from his favored branches of the Kiyuku tribe. But I was not dealing quite at that level, I was dealing more with the working level. Tom Forbord, an excellent officer, who was working under me and had been there for some time, had some excellent contacts in the American business community. Things were just sort of getting underway when I got news that I was to go to Oman as Ambassador.

Personal safety was a consideration. Every American home had a guard around it all night and usually a big dog or two in the yard. There would be the so-called Panga gangs coming around to break into homes and steal money, jewelry, etc., so security was a big consideration for the Embassy. Every bank downtown had a couple of uniformed types standing out front with a club, or in one case I saw one with an American baseball bat. There was a very high incidence of crime in the urban center of Nairobi and the residential areas. Fortunately, except for someone who tried to steal my wife's purse on a busy walkway, we weren't affected. But the city was growing rapidly and there weren't jobs for everybody.

Nairobi was an interesting place, it had a large thriving industrial center but there were poor people all around who literally lived from hand to mouth. Many of them had come in from the rural areas leaving their families back home.

We had no particular major political problem with the Kenyan government at that time. There were a lot of American firms and banks located there. We had a very active American business club which held monthly meetings. I was involved in helping to arrange these. One of the leading figures, the head of Exxon, was tossed out of the country for being too aggressive in trying to collect on bills for petroleum products supplied to Kenyatta's personal estates. He went a little too far and zip, he was out of there. A protest was to no avail.

Q: Was corruption a major problem?

WOLLE: I think it is in Nairobi. We heard a good many stories about that. Kenyatta was kind of losing his touch. I think he was getting well along in years and was not able to keep some family members and other ministers in check.

The game parks were great. So it was very different for me and I must say I really didn't have time to get my feet solidly on the ground. It would have been a real challenge because I know my two immediate predecessors had done excellent work so I like to think that with time I could have measured up to that.

Q: Bill, you left Nairobi in 1974 and received an appointment as Ambassador to Oman. Is that right?

WOLLE: Yes.

Q: You were part of a new wave at that time weren't you? The Department was looking around for younger people to be ambassadors. Could you tell me how old you were and what grade you were and how this appointment came about?

WOLLE: I was at that time 46 and an FSO-3 and stationed in Nairobi. I got a phone call from the Director General and it turned out that the Department had decided early that year, 1974, to go ahead and open up new embassies with resident ambassadors of

relatively young vintage in four Gulf posts...in Bahrain, the UAE, Qatar and Oman. I had picked out if I would be agreeable to have my name put up as ambassador-designate to Qatar. I said sure and for two or three weeks I looked around in the local public library to see what they had to say about Qatar, because I knew a fair amount about Arabia by that time but not about Qatar.

What happened was that about three weeks later I got another call and they said that it had been changed and they assumed I would be agreeable to Oman. I said that that sounded much better to me because I had much more of an interest in Oman having first gone over there with Walter Schwinn at the time that he signed on our behalf the 1958 treaty.

Q: I might just for the record state that until a few years before these new ambassadors were appointed, our consulate general in Dhahran covered Qatar and the Trucial States and Bahrain while Aden covered Oman.

WOLLE: So it became clear that I was to go to Muscat rather than to Qatar and that was fine with me. I figured it was more of a country somehow and I knew more about it and it was an interesting place, etc.

So I closed out in Nairobi and went back to Washington at the end of May and went through the hearing process ending up flying into Muscat by way of Kuwait. I actually arrived in Muscat on July 14, 1974 having spent a day or two with Bill Stoltzfus, our Ambassador in Kuwait. Prior to this decision to put resident ambassadors in these four Gulf posts, Bill Stoltzfus as Ambassador in Kuwait had been accredited to them and occasionally traveled to them. In Oman the Charg# d'affaires the two years before I arrived was Pat Quinlan. He had already departed.

Q: Just a quick question to look at the social structure of the Foreign Service while we are at it. How did you find the fact that here you were going as an ambassador, the title

everybody thirsts for, as a relatively young officer back in Washington with some of the older Arabist hands who were kind of waiting in line? How did this sit?

WOLLE: Well, I really didn't experience much conversation about that. Probably because when this happened I was in Nairobi, a long way not only from Washington, but any other Arabist. When I got back to DC the hearings were scheduled for just a couple of days later and I was well briefed by the desk officer at the time. I did hear as time went on that originally various names had been submitted to the powers that be back in the Department to be considered as chief of mission to these new small posts and some of those names were some of the gray heads. But the 7th floor had sent the list back and said that they wanted some more junior and hopefully vigorous names to look at. And I guess that is what happened. Anyway I didn't take any static over it, and anyway I knew I could do the job.

The Department was very good about briefing us, sending out good junior officers to help out, and providing us with supplies and backing to get going. I don't take credit for opening the post, it was just that I was the first resident ambassador. Pat Quinlan had done an excellent job of getting things set up during the two years that he was there.

Q: When you went out there, Oman later became strategic, but at the time how did the Department of State look at it during the briefings? What were the American interests in Oman at that time...1974?

WOLLE: I think the Department had realized over a period of two or three years that with the British role diminishing and the British presence in Bahrain being reduced, all those countries and particularly the three south of Bahrain were really coming into their own more in terms of oil production, commercial possibilities, general strategic importance. There might be too much of a vacuum if the British presence and efforts from Bahrain were allowed to decline and we didn't step in to try to bolster their independence...for

example in the UAE (United Arab Emirates) which had just gotten off the ground two or three years before.

There were no immediate crises in the area that prompted this decision so much, from what I had been told, as the influence upon Henry Kissinger, Secretary of State, of David Rockefeller.

Q: Yes, David was a banker, sort of the major American banker...Chase Manhattan...

WOLLE: Mr. American Banker in the Middle East. He frequently traveled through the area. He had some branches in the region. When he came back to the States he would go down...his views were always welcomed by the Administration at that time. I think he made a big pitch early in 1974 after one of his trips saying, “Look, the French are getting in there, they have already gotten ahead of us. Europeans and others are coming. Those small countries are here to stay. We shouldn't simply assume that the British influence will continue to keep them on a proper conservative path, so lets go ourselves.” I have understood since then that that is what really prompted, more than any other single thing, the decision at the time.

Q: Kissinger had very close ties with the Rockefellers.

WOLLE: Anyway I was certainly welcomed with open arms in Oman. They were happy to have this newly elevated presence and wasted no time in flying me down to Salalah on the south coast in the province of Dhofar three days after I arrived at Muscat, to present credentials.

Q: What was the geographic position of Oman, this has been mixed? Where was the site of government and how were the boundaries?

WOLLE: The historic boundary problems with Saudi Arabia had been settled. Sultan Qaboos, at this point, was on good terms with the Saudi ruler again. He was faced with a

bitter guerrilla-type war in the southern part of Oman. The whole southern coastal region is called Dhofar and the capital there on the Arabian Sea is Salalah. The Sultan, who had taken over from his father in 1970, was born and grew up in Salalah. His mother was from that part of Oman. So he is very close to the Dhofaris. That is one reason he was very concerned about getting the upper hand in this warfare situation which had really been kicked off in the 1960s when his father was still Sultan.

In fact his father, Sultan Said bin Taimur, seldom left Salalah the last 10 or 15 years of his life. He avoided Muscat, which is in the northern part of the country. Qaboos on the other hand spends the majority of his time in Muscat, the real seat of government. But he spent several months every summer in Salalah.

So when I arrived, July, 1974, he was, as I expected he would be, in Salalah and that was where he conducted his business. The war was going fairly well at that point thanks to a lot of help from British commanders but it wasn't until a year later that the war was effectively terminated.

Q: Who was supporting this guerrilla movement, what was the origin of that?

WOLLE: The organization that was causing the revolution called itself the Popular Front for the Liberation for Oman and South Arabia. It was backed heavily by the leftist government in South Yemen, from Aden. The supplies came in from South Yemen across the land border. The country down there is quite difficult terrain with some low mountains. During the summer time particularly, the monsoon rain, winds and storms come in from the south and make it difficult to patrol effectively and to keep trails and tracks free of incursions, or to conduct any kind of air strikes or offensive action against the guerrillas. The British and the Omani forces would wait until the winter months to conduct their main operations. But in the summer months the guerrillas would be supplied over these trails.

Incidentally, when I was at my hearings for that position back in Washington, Senator Fulbright was present. You know how it is, you go up there the first time and wonder if they

are going to ask you any serious questions or not. I figured after a few minutes I had it made because after just a very few questions Senator Fulbright said that he hoped I would enjoy it in the far reaches of Arabia. So I assumed from that remark that the committee wouldn't be too hard on me, and it wasn't.

The actual presentation of credentials was special to me because it took place in the same room of the old castle down there, right on the sea coast, in which Consul General Schwinn and I had met with the Sultan's father in 1958, 16 years before, for the treaty to be signed. On this occasion in 1974...it was in the middle of the monsoon season, clouds were very, very low and moving fast, the sea was wild outside. Instead of air conditioning, which, of course, that palace enjoyed, the Sultan had the windows flung wide open and the wind was coming in and you could hear the breakers down below. It was a very dramatic setting.

Q: I might add too for anybody looking at this transcript later on, we do have an interview with Walter Schwinn who talks about it. When he did it there was no electricity, no air conditioning. I can ask some questions later on but maybe there are some things you would like to bring up about your time there?

WOLLE: The small Embassy that we had consisted of only about nine or ten Americans, including five officers and a few staff members and several Omani nationals. We worked out of an ancient building in the heart of Muscat, almost adjacent to the British Embassy, which was more of a palatial establishment. In fact, my residence was in the same building as the Embassy, just on the upper floor. It had a unique attractiveness about it, but it was a little difficult for some guests to negotiate all the high concrete steps.

The highlight of that first year was probably the event that took place in Washington rather than in Muscat. It was the visit of the Sultan to the United States. The idea of this visit had been kicked around for quite some time before I arrived. During the fall of 1974 it was set up for January, 1975 and took place.

It was not a State Visit, but was an official visit and his first time ever in this country. It featured pretty much the same things that a State Visit would have with the exception of the big ceremony on the White House lawn and dinner at the White House. But there was a meeting of 30 minutes or so with President Ford, with Secretary Kissinger present. And there was a meeting with Secretary Kissinger at the State Department. There was a dinner hosted by the Secretary of State on the 8th floor...a very lavish affair. The Vice President, Nelson Rockefeller, hosted a luncheon at Anderson House, close to the White House. The Sultan was accompanied by his uncle, Sayyid Tarik, who had been his Prime Minister the first year after the 1970 revolution and was still functioning as an occasional adviser to the Sultan, and a delegation officially of seven or eight other persons.

Everything went very well and the Sultan seemed pleased by the fact that the visit was happening. There wasn't too much in the way of concrete result with the exception of agreement on our side to provide the Sultan with several TOW missile launchers.

Q: Target on wire type, an anti-tank missile basically.

WOLLE: Right. So these in due course arrived in Oman in early 1974 with a team of instructors to train the Omanis and I imagine some British as well in using them. They became a small part of the effective campaign in late spring of 1975 which marked the end of the conflict in Dhofar.

Q: The American Ambassador usually accompanies the State visitors so I assume you did?

WOLLE: Yes, I was asked to come back a few days ahead of time for further discussions about what the Sultan was interested in discussing, etc. So I was present throughout the visit and returned to Oman afterwards.

I recall Secretary Kissinger pulling me aside after we walked out of the Oval Office and saying, “My God, what am I going to talk about with this man. I have exhausted the

subjects that we have been given. He doesn't respond. Give me something before the dinner tonight." And it was true, the Sultan reacted quite in character really. He is not a man of many words. He is retiring and reserved and tends to answer yes and no and not to carry on his side of the conversation very vigorously. But in the end things went okay.

Q: You bring a man who is reserved like this, a small country, and he meets with President Ford, what is the President prompted to do, what happens?

WOLLE: Really just a friendly little chat. There weren't any great items of note to discuss. For example, Oman is far removed from the Israel scene. The Omanis take only that degree of interest in that situation that they really have to for the sake of their status as an Arab country. But they don't want to waste time discussing it. The Sultan was asked to tell a little about what he had done for the country in the three or four years since he had taken over and how it was going. He talked a little bit about oil production and the status of educational and health development, which was almost zero under his father, and was being greatly expanded in the 1970s. There was a little discussion about the events that were occurring in Saudi Arabia, the upper Gulf, and the Middle East generally, but nothing of any dramatic scope.

Nor was that intended. The visit was conceived as something that would show the Sultan that, Yes, we knew him; we really did recognize him; we wanted him to continue on the path of modernization; we were particularly pleased that he had resolved the old problems between Oman and Saudi Arabia; and that sort of thing.

Q: Now laying out a trip like this, and he had never been to the United States and obviously we wanted to put our best face on, did we try to show him some of the strengths of the United States including our military capabilities?

WOLLE: I believe there was a session over in the Pentagon but I wasn't present at that. I don't believe there was anything in the way of showing him what our forces could do.

Q: Or take him on an aircraft carrier, that sort of thing.

WOLLE: No. We did manage in the fall of 1976, back in Oman, Admiral Crowe and I...when he was on one of his visits with the USS Dupont present in Muscat harbor, we managed on almost no notice to get the Sultan's agreement to visit the ship. He made a very nice entry in the log saying that this was the first time he had ever set foot on a foreign ship in Omani harbor. So we scored well on that one. But in terms of the 1975 visit there wasn't any real emphasis on the defense side other then encouraging him to carry on with the prosecuting the war in Dhofar.

Q: Basically at that point we felt it was the British responsibility for supporting the military.

WOLLE: Exactly. And he was getting, I believed at the time and still do, very excellent advice and help from them on conducting that campaign which proved successful.

Q: These were the Omani Scouts?

WOLLE: Well, it was the Omani army, officially called the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF). The officers who called the shots in the Omani military were seconded British officers and there were special units of the British SAS (Special Air Services). So it was British leadership and training, and Omani determination and courage, and by 1975 the presence of three or four thousand Iranian troops, which helped to turn the tables. There were still some Iranian troops there for a couple of years afterwards. But I think they didn't do so much other then simply increase the manpower base and make it possible for the campaign to have a better chance for success.

Q: How did you conduct business in Oman?

WOLLE: Notably with the Foreign Minister. Technically the Sultan remained his own Foreign Minister, but the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs was Qais al-Zawawi from a private family hailing originally from Iran. But his forbears had been in Oman for two or

three generations. Yusuf al-Alawi and a couple of other key officials in the Foreign Ministry were always available.

In terms of the military and the military campaign, it was through the commanding officer of the British with headquarters in Muscat, General Ken Perkins, and on trips to Dhofar with the commander of the Dhofar brigade and actual prosecutor of the war, Brigadier John Akehurst, who at a later point wrote a good book about the whole campaign called “We Won A War.” (In fact, both Perkins and Akehurst personally came out very well because of their service in Oman. They were both promoted to very responsible jobs in the British military later on. In fact, I think Akehurst at one later point became commander of British forces in Germany.)

We also dealt, of course, with the producing oil company in Oman. The company at that time was called Petroleum Development Oman, Ltd. PDO was heavily Shell and the key officials running the production and transportation of crude oil were either British or Dutch...or, oddly enough, Swiss. The head of PDO most of my time was a Swiss national with long service with Shell.

Other then that a number of the leading Omani merchant families had male members who had been educated either in India or Britain, spoke English well, were good businessmen, merchants, and very pro-American, readily accessible. Most of the ministers in Qaboos' cabinet, were more tribal figures. They spoke nothing but their native Arabic and had really very little responsibility for anything we were particularly interested in. So other then courtesy calls and the like, we didn't do too much business with the majority of the cabinet.

There were exceptions. One was a very active Minister of Communications who spoke English to some degree. He had been educated in the Soviet Union. In fact he had a Russian wife who was a doctor. Oddly though he was extremely pro-American. He was very good at assisting certain American companies to bid on some of the contracts for development.

I had a DCM who doubled as political officer. I had an economic/commercial officer, an administrative officer, budget and fiscal officer. There was very little consular work at the time so we didn't have a full time consular officer.

We had a public affairs officer resident in Abu Dhabi, who every couple of months came down for a few days. That could have amounted to practically nothing, however, George Naifeh, who was in that position most of the years I was in Oman, was very active. He liked Oman and he was very good at helping us arrange certain cultural events, and for visiting performers. We had an American handicraft show as part of our Bicentennial exhibition in 1976 and George was instrumental in getting that set up. It was a big success. It was one thing that drew in a lot of ordinary urban people to the hotel where it was held. It was often difficult to get that sort of person involved in any way. We had no reading library.

Q: Was there a reason why you didn't?

WOLLE:George had that kind of a presence up in the UAE. I think it was probably a matter of finances and priorities.

We had occasional US Naval ship visits and had no trouble getting them approved. We had trouble only in figuring out things that the sailors could do on shore leave without getting bored. We usually arranged some kind of beach party far enough out so they could unload their beer and have a good time while we entertained the officers at a garden party at the Embassy. I came close to becoming sea sick a couple of times in being taken out to and from Naval vessels in small boats.

Q: Pretty choppy waters.

WOLLE: If it was winter and there happened to be a north wind, Muscat harbor was pretty choppy. And the visits were in Muscat rather than in any other locale, and the ships lay out at anchor.

There were about 20 American companies with some kind of presence in the country. There were two or three oil supply firms; one American legal firm. FMC, Food Machinery Company, had started in the very early 1970s an experimental agricultural farm about 70 miles north of Muscat along what is called the Batinah coast. I don't know that it ever succeeded too well, it eventually left in 1976.An American individual had been hired to run the port near Muscat that had been named Port Qaboos. This was not in Muscat harbor as such, but across the mountain, two or three miles away in the town of Matrah, a sister city of Muscat. Anyway this had been dredged as a modern port soon after the Sultan took over in 1970. We all thought that the individual in charge over there, Joel Wilcox, had done and was doing an excellent job, but for some reason he and several other individual expatriate managers for foreign companies eventually came up against some problem or stepped on somebody's foot and there were several cases, and his was one, where suddenly they were told they had 24 or 48 hours to leave the country...thank you very much but goodby. We made some representations in one or two of those cases, but never really got anywhere. I have never really learned what caused the fall of some of those individuals.

Pan American Airways was another good presence for us. PanAm had been hired to update and operate the principal airport in the country, which is about 20 miles north of Muscat and known as Seeb Airport. PanAm had a number of Americans as airport manager, operations officer, etc. They were very cooperative with us, of course, and helpful in terms of our reporting on transportation and aviation.

The Intercontinental Hotel was being built when I arrived and was inaugurated a year or so later after some delay due to subsoil problems.

Q: Did you find that although we were quite content with the British running the defense of the country, that we were going head-to-head with the British on things like landing rights, or commercial things?

WOLLE: This varied a great deal, more then anything according to the makeup of the individual Brit who felt he was going to lose out. On the military side in terms of information and briefings on what was happening in Dhofar we got superb cooperation and the same whenever we had top level visitors. However, the British air officer commanding the Sultan's air force, Wing Commander Bennett, while personally friendly, was, I think, very jealous of his domain and what might happen if we got a little too close down the road.

On the commercial side, I think, certain British advisers in ministries were very jealous of this new presence, others were not. A gentleman by the name of Tony Ashworth, who for a long time, and I think still, has ties there as public affairs adviser, was extremely helpful with a lot of day-to-day problems and with some of our visitors. But I think you could certainly say that when it came to something that involved dollars and cents, commercial interests, construction contracts, etc., the British themselves felt they were losing out, not just to us, but to Lebanese, Indian, German, French, Italian firms and they were jealous to guard their interests against any outside invasions, not specifically American.

Q: Did you find yourself being pushed to do more? I am going back to the time when I was in Saudi Arabia, Dhahran where there really was very little interest—this is 1958-60—in the Persian Gulf area. But by this time oil was getting more prevalent and oil revenues...did you find yourself very much involved in promoting American products or not?

WOLLE: There were not a great many American commercial firms coming in and seeking our assistance. Most of the American sales were conducted from abroad. The American automobile companies saw chances for a somewhat bigger market and would talk things over at the Embassy when they were in the country, but not really seek any help. They

all had active Omani agents who were well versed in competition. Japanese cars were coming in in ever larger numbers.

It really wasn't a situation where we were called upon by American business very often to intercede in any way. The contracts in Oman, even though it was in a busy development stage, were nothing near the size of similar contracts further up the Gulf or in Saudi Arabia. I think most American firms were still concentrating on the heart of the peninsula and on Kuwait rather than Oman.

One reason, perhaps, for this relative disinterest was that development had gotten a little bit out of hand in the 1972-74 period. Oman was not able to pay all its bills all of a sudden. Some contracts were scratched, some contributors were not paid on time, and in the end the government in effect made a scapegoat out of the long time British economic advisor, John Townsend, who departed under a cloud. Within a year or two he wrote an excellent account of his years in Oman giving his point of view on what happened to bring about this crisis. (His book was promptly banned by the Sultan's government!)

But by late 1975-76 the country was again able to resume full scale development. On the other hand by then the Dhofar war was over and with the end of that conflict Washington lost a lot of whatever interest it had and really didn't pick up that interest until some time in 1977 when the British announced that the RAF would be pulling out of Masirah Airfield. They had run Masirah Airfield ever since World War II, although oddly enough Americans had built it. (Masirah is an island off the south coast.)

Things got a little more interesting then politically for us because we were asked to discuss with the Omanis, and we succeeded in obtaining, rights for US Navy P3 aircraft...

Q: These are anti-submarine...Orions?

WOLLE: Orions, yes. ...to land occasionally, refuel and have rest and recuperation for the crews at Masirah. This was not publicly announced but was actually the very beginning of

what later, after I left, became a larger US military presence in terms of positioning stocks, landing rights, etc.

In my time this was strictly on Masirah island at the air base that the RAF left that year.

Q: Why did they leave?

WOLLE: It was a budgetary move.

Q: While you were there, we are talking about 1974-78, did anybody make any noise about Oman being a strategic assembling point, etc.?

WOLLE: I suppose that was in the back of some minds ...thinking that the landing rights might be just a foot in the door, but we still, in Washington at least, didn't realize Iran and the Shah were soon going to be in real trouble. In fact we had a state visit in Oman from the Shah sometime in 1977 and I'm sure we and everyone present figured this guy was on the throne for a long time to come. The contrary thinking really developed in 1978, especially in the summer and fall of 1978 when things really became dicey over in Tehran.

Q: Well, how did you view Iran? Again I go back to my earlier experience in the area. There was concern in places like Bahrain that the Iranian influence was not necessarily a benevolent one because the Iranians were making noises about having their influence rather then say the British. How did we feel about that in the Omani context at that time?

WOLLE: First of all there had long been a good relationship between the Iranians and the Omanis. A lot of the older Omani business families were of Persian ancestry. When the Sultan asked the Shah for help and received it, in terms of a few thousand troops to join the other forces in Dhofar in early 1975, that proved successful and relations were very good between the Sultan and the Shah.

The country that was suspected of being a trouble maker was Iraq. The Omanis for the first few years had refused to allow an Iraqi ambassador into the country. About half way

through my time in Oman they did see fit to accept a resident Iraqi ambassador and with it propounded certain restrictions which technically affected all diplomats in the country. You couldn't go beyond certain points, you had to get permission to do this and do that, but when we inquired about that we were told to just pretend those aren't in effect. “They are there for your new colleague.” I think the suspicions about the Iraqis eventually proved rather true.

Q: What were the Iraqis suspected of doing?

WOLLE: The Iraqi claim on Kuwait was part of it. Beyond that, it was felt that Iraq wanted to expand down the Gulf, to expand its influence to replace the British to the degree they could in terms of security matters, contracts, and simply become a new semi-imperial presence. But Iran was not suspected of anything of the sort and ties were good.

Q: What was our attitude in Oman towards the Iraqi Ambassador there?

WOLLE: It hardly came into play. On the surface, as far as we could see, the Iraqis were doing little if anything to justify this suspicion, but there was no question but what the suspicion existed. There were no overt signs that the Iraqis were about to tear the place apart.

When I arrived, incidentally, there were perhaps 10 or 11 other countries with resident ambassadors; when I left just four years later there were perhaps 18 or 20. A number of other countries had established a presence with non-resident ambassadors. But that custom was being frowned up by the Sultan. The first few years he had enough of this idea of representing your interests by an ambassador living somewhere else. He wanted his own stable of resident ambassadors. I think he pretty much red-lined the idea, starting about 1976, of any new countries coming in on that basis.

Q: With that number of ambassadors there must have been a good number with really nothing to do.

WOLLE: Oh, yeah. These were mostly one or two man shops, there were several of them. The active ones were, of course, the British from way back; the French were particularly active; the Germans were industrious, also the Indonesians and Egyptians.

Q: When you say they were active what were they doing?

WOLLE: Their firms were coming in with them. Highway construction companies, new oil firms. German language lessons were being offered, French was offered. Lebanon had good commercial business, flying in fruits and vegetables.

Q: The Japanese?

WOLLE: The Japanese...I don't recall that there was a Japanese embassy during my time, but there were Japanese auto companies showing up and boat loads of Toyotas, Mazdas, etc. appearing in port and taking over a good part of the market.

Q: How about relations with the Yemens?

WOLLE: Oman had diplomatic relations with North Yemen, the Yemen Arab Republic, but not with the Peoples Democratic Republic of Yemen (South Yemen), which was accused and openly admitted backing the rebels in the south. Working in Oman was a pleasure. It is an interesting country. It is an eye opener to someone who has never been in the Middle East...even to someone who has been in the Middle East for that matter. Any corner or edge of Arabia is quite different from the Jerusalem, Cairo, Beirut circuit.

Q: You were not all absorbed with the Israeli problem?

WOLLE: It was such a contrast from my experience in Jordan where you are hit with that subject at every turn of your head. It rarely, I could almost say never, arose. In fact, in the fall of 1977 when the Sultan was having his big national day events in Salalah for the first time...that was at the very time when Sadat made his trip to Jerusalem, the very weekend.

The whole diplomatic corps, the cabinet, government officials, merchants, everybody had been flown down in several chartered planes to spend two or three days in Salalah. When Sadat made his trip the Sultan became, I believe, the first if not the only Arab leader to approve the visit. He would never and could never have done such a thing if he had been located geographically in a place where he would have been vulnerable to Arab pressures.

Q: Did you find yourself acting as a source of information to the Sultan on this problem?

WOLLE: Only to a small degree. He really wasn't that interested in it. It is just a different world. He was not in a situation where he had a lot of Palestinians living and working in the country. There were Jordanian and Egyptian school teachers. But essentially he just kept the whole thing at arms length. He had no internal pressures that we were aware of that would cause him to change his mind.

Q: How about United Nations votes? Did they become important or was it sort of pro forma as far as getting them?

WOLLE: Oman tended to go along with the Arab League on things like that. The Sultan, himself, seldom attended Arab heads of state gatherings, although he did from time to time. He usually sent his Foreign Minister to do that. We would made routine representations every fall or on an ad hoc basis whenever issues came up in the United Nations.

Q: Is there anything else we should cover?

WOLLE: I think that is about it.

Q: Oh, one other thing, the Carter administration came in in 1977, did you note from your somewhat distant view any change in approach towards the Middle East?

WOLLE: No, I think the view of the Lower Gulf remained very much the same. In fact, it was during the Carter administration that we were asked to try to secure landing rights there in Masirah.

Q: You left in 1978?

WOLLE: In May, 1978 and was assigned for a year as head of the Near East/South Asia Division of the Intelligence and Research Bureau (INR/NESA).

Q: 1978-79.

WOLLE: That year in NESA was dominated by two main events—the fall of the Shah and the Camp David Accords. Actually the role of NESA was gathering and writing up intelligence reports, briefing the principals in the NEA Bureau and elsewhere. We did not have an active day-to-day role in the decision making, although certain of my 8-10 analysts were very influential in the NEA Bureau because of their particular expertise and willingness to express their own views based on their knowledge and intelligence. Notably George Griffin, our analyst for South Asia and Iran. He was, I think, one of the first to really speak out and try to impress upon the NEA Bureau in State that the real problem that winter was not going to be Camp David and the fallout from that, but was going to be Iran. I can remember him doing his best at a couple of staff meetings held by the Assistant Secretary in NEA to try to direct the discussion around the table more and more to the situation of the Shah and not to get too wrapped up in what was happening in Israel and Egypt.

And, by the way, for anyone who wants to know a lot of what was really happening in that period, I think the best source is Jim Bill's book. We arranged several seminars that winter trying to get together the decision makers and others within the State Department to listen to the views of those in academia particularly about what was happening in Iran, what were the underlying currents.

One of the speakers on several occasions was Professor James Bill who now runs the William and Mary School of International Affairs. His book accurately gives credit to certain individuals within the Department in that period preceding the Shah's fall for excellent analysis of the Iranian scene.

Q: You were in an interesting position. You had not been involved in it beforehand, but there had been this feeling that we had had almost a blind eye towards developments in Iran, particularly as to the strength of the Shah and that reporting questioning his status was frowned upon. Did you find that there was a deficient data base on that when you got there?

WOLLE: I can't say that definitively. I was just getting into it. I had a couple of very experienced Iranian hands on board and the first few months I really left it to them to do the briefings, etc. It wasn't long before everybody was fully aware of the precarious position the Shah was in. I started work in September and by early winter there was no question in anybody's mind that it was a very serious situation. So there had been a build up before that, I think a period of a year or two where most of the analysts failed to read the tea leaves correctly. There were just a few who did and proved to be right.

I happened to be in Iran on the way out of Oman in May, 1978. We flew out and spent a few days in Tehran. I certainly was amazed by the high degree of security around our Embassy and given personally to the Ambassador and other officers ...vehicle escorts and that sort of thing. It was a shock in a way coming from Oman where we had minimal security consciousness and saw no need for more.

Q: Then you were appointed to be Ambassador...?

WOLLE: In the spring of 1979 I received a call asking if they could put up my name to be considered to go to the UAE to replace Fran Dickman who had served three years there succeeding Mike Sterner, who had been our first resident ambassador. I nodded my head

and figured that there was some competition for this, but within two or three weeks the word came down that I was it. I left in September for Abu Dhabi.

Q: Of the United Arab Emirates, the capital is in Abu Dhabi?

WOLLE: The capital is in Abu Dhabi. Dubai is the main commercial center, but Abu Dhabi is by all means the capital and is the seat of Sheikh Zayid who since the inauguration of the Federation in 1971 has been the UAE President.

Q: There are seven Trucial States, is that correct?

WOLLE: There are seven Trucial States. Those two that have been mentioned are by all odds the most important. Sharjah is number three. It is small, but it is adjacent to Dubai and has had more of a history as a settled populated city. The other four are off to the northeast. Two very tiny ones, Ajman and Umm al-Qaiwain, and larger sheikhdoms of Ras al-Khaymah and Fujairah.

So essentially it is Abu Dhabi, Dubai and the five smaller sheikhdoms with Abu Dhabi financing the Federation for the most part.

Actually the two years I spent there were years when things were going well as far as the Federation is concerned. There had been a lot of skeptics once the British put the UAE together in 1971, the skeptics thinking it would soon break up and everybody would go their separate ways similar to the Federation the British tried in Central Africa at one point.

But in 1979 Sheikh Rashid of Dubai who long had been the overseer of that small principality agreed to be the Prime Minister of the Federation. So I got to the country and found out that he was literally traveling weekly from Dubai to Abu Dhabi, close to a two hour trip by car, to chair the cabinet meetings. This continued much of the time that I was there, although Sheikh Rashid suffered a physical setback in either late 1980 or early 1981 and his role was diminished after that.

Also Sheikh Rashid had agreed to help finance the Federal budget. Now I don't know if he ever did kick in much money, it was kept pretty quiet, but he was cooperating much more then had been the case in some of the earlier years. Perhaps because of my experience that first year I became quite an optimist as far as the future of the Federation was concerned. Almost every reporter who happened upon the scene or some visiting non-resident ambassador, whatever, would ask whether there was a viable federation. They realized there were vast differences among the members. But I became an optimist. I felt that Zayid was a respected, hard-working individual, who had a very good image. Rashid focused more on the commercial possibilities and developments in Dubai, but was spending some time on Federation matters.

Militarily there was a down side because Dubai, in particular, was still maintaining its own military force. Theoretically its armed forces were part of the Federation military...this was in name only.

Oil production was going well. Climate for business was excellent. Compared to the very small American business community in Oman, there was a much larger presence in the UAE, particularly in Dubai and related to the oil industry.

Q: The oil, was it mainly Abu Dhabi and Dubai?

WOLLE: Yes. While I was there Sharjah made some discoveries but it had not been developed. Some of the smaller sheikhdoms were seeking their own oil. I thought at the time, and perhaps in a way still do, that it was good for the Federation that the smaller sheikhdoms were not discovering oil or gas to any extent because if they did they would want to break out on their own. That certainly was going to be true up in Ras al-Khaymah where the ruler had a couple of drilling companies busy and wanted nothing more than to be independent at some point. But financially he had no prospect of it.

The bulk of UAE economic development consisted of new ports, new highways, new petrochemical plants, etc. in and around Abu Dhabi city and in Dubai.

Q: Historically in these areas succession was usually by assassination...

WOLLE: Yes, and that had happened in Sharjah not long before I arrived. My two years seemed to be a stable period in terms of that sort of thing. Within Abu Dhabi, I might say, Sheikh Zayid was trying more and more to turn things over to his son, Sheikh Khalid. He was put in charge of affairs of the city of Abu Dhabi, and of military matters. But he didn't seem to be someone with a lot of capability or real interest and I am not sure what has developed there. Sheikh Zayid, I think, wisely was trying to delegate to Khalid some of his own duties and test him, perhaps.

The succession question loomed in Dubai if Sheikh Rashid's illness became serious. He had two or three sons actively engaged in matters of state as well as business and military in Dubai and there was some thought that there would be a real falling out eventually.

In reflecting back at some of these assignments I had in places in the Arabian Peninsular the stages each of these small countries has gone through one after another is an interesting phenomenon.

For instance, Oman in the 1970s was really beginning to develop for the first time in a modern way, Sultan Qaboos having ousted his father in 1970. Well the UAE had gotten into that stage very heavily throughout the 1960s. Kuwait had been on that path in the 1950s. And Saudi Arabia didn't get into the stage of full development until the mid-1940s. Although oil was discovered in the 1930s, World War II came along before very much could be done with it. So you had the Saudis in the 1940s showing the way. Kuwait trying to learn a few things from the Saudi experience in the 1950s, the UAE in the 1960s and Oman in the 1970s.

And in each case, I think, if you look back you will find that about 10 to 15 years after the expansion really got started each of these places ran into a real downturn. They couldn't pay their bills, they got over-extended, contractors got mad and left the scene, etc. The pattern seems clear, though with varied timing.

Q: How did the down fall of the Shah, the crisis with our people being taken hostage in the Embassy and just the rise of Iranian and Shiite fundamentalism play in the UAE when you were there?

WOLLE: Dubai has always been very close to the Iranians, tradewise. There is a fairly large nest of Iranian citizens and Iranian descendants resident in Dubai, particularly. The Department was always concerned that we would have security problems, particularly for our branch office in Dubai. (We had a small one or two men branch office in Dubai.) In fact, in my years and until I left when we got new premises in a modern building our branch office was located right on the edge of the Iranian commercial section of Dubai. But we didn't have any problems. The focus was on business as it usually is in Dubai. But there were pictures of Khomeini and so forth hanging from every window.

Sheikh Zayid and the Federation tried to take pretty much a hands off policy. They didn't want to say or do anything to stir up the new Iranian government, Khomeini and company, and didn't want to go out on a limb with regard to the Iranians. They wanted our hostages to be freed. They knew Iran was on the wrong road in terms of holding diplomats as hostages and in some other respects as well. But they weren't going to make a show of their feelings. I suspect that pretty much remains the case today.

Part way through my first year in the UAE, there was the outbreak in the Mecca Mosque.

Q: Could you explain that?

WOLLE: A group of radicals, without going into the details, attempted to storm, did storm and took over, occupied the Mosque at Mecca and caused a furor throughout the Muslim

world. In Pakistan the word was that the US was at the root of this evil and therefore our Embassy was stormed. That was a disaster in itself. Then it led to a certain panic in Washington which urged the evacuation of all dependents and non-essential personnel in the Gulf posts, one of which I was serving in, while at the same time not ordering or encouraging such movement in Saudi Arabia. Those of us in places like Muscat, Abu Dhabi, Doha and Bahrain felt that if anybody was going to have a problem here it is going to be the Americans in the eastern province of Saudi Arabia where Shiite Muslims are numerous.

We felt that the wrong Embassies had been downsized and there were a lot of bitter cables that went back and forth on this subject. But in any case, many, if not most of our dependents chose to leave and were gone for a few months...it wasn't too long a period. There were no repercussions in Abu Dhabi that affected our Embassy or our Embassy's business. The only thing that stands out was that for about six months thereafter the UAE armed forces kept a couple of armored cars down below near the front door of the building in which we had the Embassy.

Q: Were you given instructions from time to time from Washington to go in and try to get the UAE to support us and this type of thing? There was a lot of pressure on our whole diplomatic establishment to try to come to some sort of resolution to the holding of our hostages in our Embassy, which went on for 444 days.

WOLLE: Not too often. We were asked to discuss it a lot, but we weren't under a lot of pressure to get results. I think Washington correctly realized Abu Dhabi would not carry the weight that was needed to make an impact on any government in Tehran. That must have been the thinking because we weren't by any means a focal point of discussion with host governments toward that end.

There was quite a bit of concern in Abu Dhabi and Dubai that the Iraq-Iran war, which had been kicked off the late summer of 1980, would somehow spread to parts of the Gulf

below Kuwait. But except for a couple of overflights of one kind or another in the first few weeks of the war...even that didn't cause us any real problem at all. The war was a leading item on most news broadcasts, but we didn't really have any problems because of it.

Q: Did you sense a change in attitude towards the Persian Gulf as now becoming more critical to us because there was concern that the Soviets may intervene, that Iran might win and this might have repercussions, and that we were beginning to think about using that area as a place where we might have to put troops in?

WOLLE: We were not burdened very much with that sort of thing, no. The Department seemed to be more interested with regard to the UAE in following petroleum developments closely to see that Mani Otaiba, a long time oil minister in the UAE, didn't suddenly change his conservative policies. He was a regular and frequent contact of mine. He seemed to be making his decisions quite “correctly” from our point of view.

Q: Where did the UAE fit in with OPEC? Were they with the moderate side?

WOLLE: Pretty much the moderate side. Pretty close to the Saudis. They hesitated to let any real chasm develop between Saudi Arabia and the UAE on oil matters.

Q: The Buraymi problem had long been settled, I take it?

WOLLE: Yes, years before. The Omanis were still carefully manning their border points around Buraymi but the UAE was not bothering with any nonsense like that. They weren't afraid of the Omanis. In fact, it was interesting that most of the UAE military consisted of Omani men. The Omanis would come across the border and join up and send their remittances back to Oman. Maybe they are just better soldiers than those of the UAE. But, of course, there are a lot more Omanis than there are natives of all the Trucial States put together.

Q: The Trucial States were basically smugglers, they are sea people.

WOLLE: And the overall population of the UAE is only 20-25 percent native UAE. Most of them are workers who have come in if not from Oman and other Arab countries, from South Asia.

Q: What was the attitude of the government toward foreign workers? Was this something we monitored?

WOLLE: We just tried to keep abreast of it. We really didn't play any part in that. It is a major problem for the UAE, of course. Just like in Kuwait. For the UAE perhaps the problem doesn't have one aspect that is serious for the Kuwaitis, because the Palestinian presence in the UAE has never been proportionally as large as it is in Kuwait. So many of the expatriates, if not Omani are from Pakistan and increasingly from East Asia, Thailand, the Philippines, etc. That is a long term problem, there are not enough native people to do all the work and if there were they might not want to do it anyway. (It is the Saudis' problem too.)

But for us our activities were a pretty standard mix of just normal reporting, though we were about to get into the military sales business. We had an air survey team come in at one point during my tour to look at the UAE air force to see what they might need. In fact the UAE had gotten nervous enough about the Iran-Iraq war to want to upgrade their military considerably. While I was there they filed a number of shopping lists for military hardware, but none of that had really come to any decision by the time I left. In part it was delayed my our sending a survey team to get our own estimate of what they could use, could handle. Then we were also still skeptical about the ability of Sheikh Zayid to get Dubai to go along with him on military matters. We didn't want to arm an Abu Dhabi force which would then take on Sheikh Rashid's forces up in Dubai.

Q: You left there in 1981?

WOLLE: In 1981 in the spring, to 3 years on detail at the Industrial College of the Armed Forces.

Q: Quickly on the Industrial College of the Armed Forces, what was your impression of how the military looked at the foreign affairs establishment?

WOLLE: Not all but most of the military students at ICAF in contrast to most of the students at the National War College are sent there because they are to become specialists in logistics, mobilization and that sort of thing. So the curriculum at ICAF concentrates more on the use of computers, military manpower questions, administration. Contrasted to the War College curriculum which offers somewhat more of an emphasis on strategy, foreign affairs, geographical regions.

Trips, for instance, that are taken each year by the different colleges: the ICAF trips focus on certain industries, concentrated, perhaps, in certain foreign countries, whereas the War College trips focus on international, political and military relations. ICAF also focuses more on economics. I mention all this because I found that at ICAF the students were very receptive to anything that I could slip into the curriculum that had to do with international affairs, foreign countries, US vs USSR, etc.

I found a fair amount of interest in the elective subject that I offered each year essentially on the Gulf area which was of interest to them at that time because the Iraq-Iran war was still going on. So I found them receptive.

Anyhow I would say that a State Department officer assigned on detail to one of those institutions really has to work at it to keep fully busy because the duties that are assigned aren't over burdening. You lead class sessions which, while worthwhile, are really discussions rather than having to prepare long lectures week in and week out. The emphasis of both colleges is on collegial discussion rather than lecturing. It is not as though you suddenly have to teach two or three courses as though you were a college

professor. There is a lot of reading to do and the more you do the better you are equipped to lead the discussions. And there are certain committee duties and student evaluations, student counseling and that sort of thing.

But from my observation in three years there, as well as my earlier observation in a year as a student at the National War College in the late 1960s, an officer detailed to teach at one of those Service schools has to sort of have an inner mission or determination to prepare and tell what he knows, to look for opportunities to teach an elective course or to bring in from his own experience new points of view. The officers are mostly very receptive to that because they feel that part of the value to them of getting a year off from their command or military assignment is to widen their horizons, to take a look at some new things.

Q: Then you were in Personnel for the last two years, from 1984-86. This is a very interesting time because there were certainly a lot of pressures and they must have impacted on the Senior Personnel. Could you just tell me some of the things that you were concerned with?

WOLLE: Yes that was a two year period from 1984-86 where I learned a lot. For example, how do ambassadors get selected. Of course, during this two year assignment I and my two or three colleagues working in the office were sort of the start up point of rummaging through files, talking to deputy assistant secretaries who knew of officers' backgrounds, qualifications and pros and cons and coming up with suggested names and bios to provide higher up the chain and eventually to the Director General of the Foreign Service and the committees who select chiefs of mission for consideration.

It was a formalized process but not too rigid...a lot of lobbying is done by senior officers, not necessarily with us in the Senior Personnel Office, but within their own Bureaus. In putting lists together, we in Senior Personnel, directly or indirectly get information and feed it into these lists. The process took up a considerable amount of our time. At any given

time the system is a little different, but there are basically a couple of committees that meet and go over names and perhaps send the whole list back and ask for a new selection.

And then there is follow up work that has to be done when a name is picked out. But I felt that everyone had his or her chance in the sense that we tried to be very fair about looking at personnel files...now the files we maintain in Senior Officer Personnel are not the performance files, they don't have efficiency reports. They are files that take note of what assignments have been, certain commendation letters, descriptive accounts...it is hard to discuss it and describe it accurately. We could, of course, get our hands on the actual performance files when we needed to write up proper bios for our superiors.

And the process goes on just about year round, although it focuses pretty much during the fall and winter months because most of the movement takes place in the summer.Two aspects of our work in those two years took up a lot of time and are worth mentioning. First there was the question of over complement. What to do with senior officers who came out of an assignment and don't have a new one. At any given time, anywhere from 20-25 to 50-55 officers were on what we call over complement status. That didn't mean they had nothing to do because for the most part they were on very short details, helping out here, there or somewhere, filling places while someone went on leave, etc. But the pressure from above was to find permanent posts for these people.

One device that was hit upon during this period was the so-called official short tour. By definition it was six months or less. This would look better on the officer's record, to be assigned to something officially by a personnel notification and not simply that, well, he helped out here for three weeks and there for six weeks, etc. How to get individual officers off of over complement, particularly those whose reputation was somehow besmirched, justifiably or not...maybe simply someone who had done an excellent job all along but had stepped on his boss' toes in his last job and somehow the word got around. The short tour system reduced the over complement rolls somewhat, but the problem never really

will completely go away because there are always people between assignments and not getting the jobs that they want.

Then the other thing that was developing and had started the year before I arrived was the whole business of limited career extensions or LCEs, which came about with the new Foreign Service Act of a few years before. This meant that senior officers whose time in class was ending would come up for review before a Personnel board or by the regular Promotion Boards which would then sit and consider LCEs...whether or not an officer would be given a three year extension.

When I set foot in Senior Personnel in the summer of 1984, my predecessor was just putting together for the first time letters which would notify those who had succeeded and those who had failed to receive a LCE, i.e. setting up the mechanics for administering the limited career extension system. Then we went through the same drill in the summer and fall of 1985, the year before I retired, working on the basis of the year before and hoping there wouldn't be too many unjustified squawks. And, of course, ever since then this has been done annually. I hope that the foundations that were set in those years prove to be working.

Q: It was a very difficult time wasn't it?

WOLLE: Yes, perhaps especially for the officers who were in the new FSO-1 category and trying to get into the Senior ranks, that's where most of the smoke and fire was coming from. But at the same time the senior officers were, in many cases, finding that their career wasn't going to go until they were 58, 60, 62 or 65, it was going to end sometime in their early, mid or late 50s because they weren't going to get a limited career extension. And even if they did it was for three years and they might not get another one. In my time we had had, of course, no experience of repeat LCEs so I don't know what that has come to.

Q: How about the problem of women and minorities? There must have been a lot of pressure on you to treat these groups well because of the feeling that they had not been treated as well prior to that.

WOLLE: Yes. But in our case we were working with anyone who was a senior officer, they were our clients. Relatively, of course, there were few women and minorities in that group. I think more of the pressure...and we were as careful as could be to give them every opportunity to compete against their male colleagues ...perhaps more of the pressure has come at the middle and more junior ranks. In fact the whole question of entry into the Foreign Service, how to get more women, how to get more minorities, and how to get them more opportunities to proceed up through the lower and into the middle ranks and then to become senior officers.

We frequently were asked to do statistical tabulations: Okay, how many senior officer women do we have and where are they assigned and when were they last promoted. Things of that sort. But in terms of finding assignments for them it wasn't a problem because they tended to be good quality officers and they were in demand.

Q: You left in 1986?

WOLLE: I retired in the summer of 1986, that is right.

Q: No desire to get back into the Arab world?

WOLLE: Well, I wouldn't object if some opportunity came up. But I think probably I had enough of the Arab world. I have a very keen interest in it, but I think I have an equally keen interest in living and observing in the United States. Also for some personal and family reasons I haven't really made any kind of assertive effort at all since I retired to rejoin the fray in terms of Middle East exposure, activities. But my interest hasn't dimmed.

End of interview